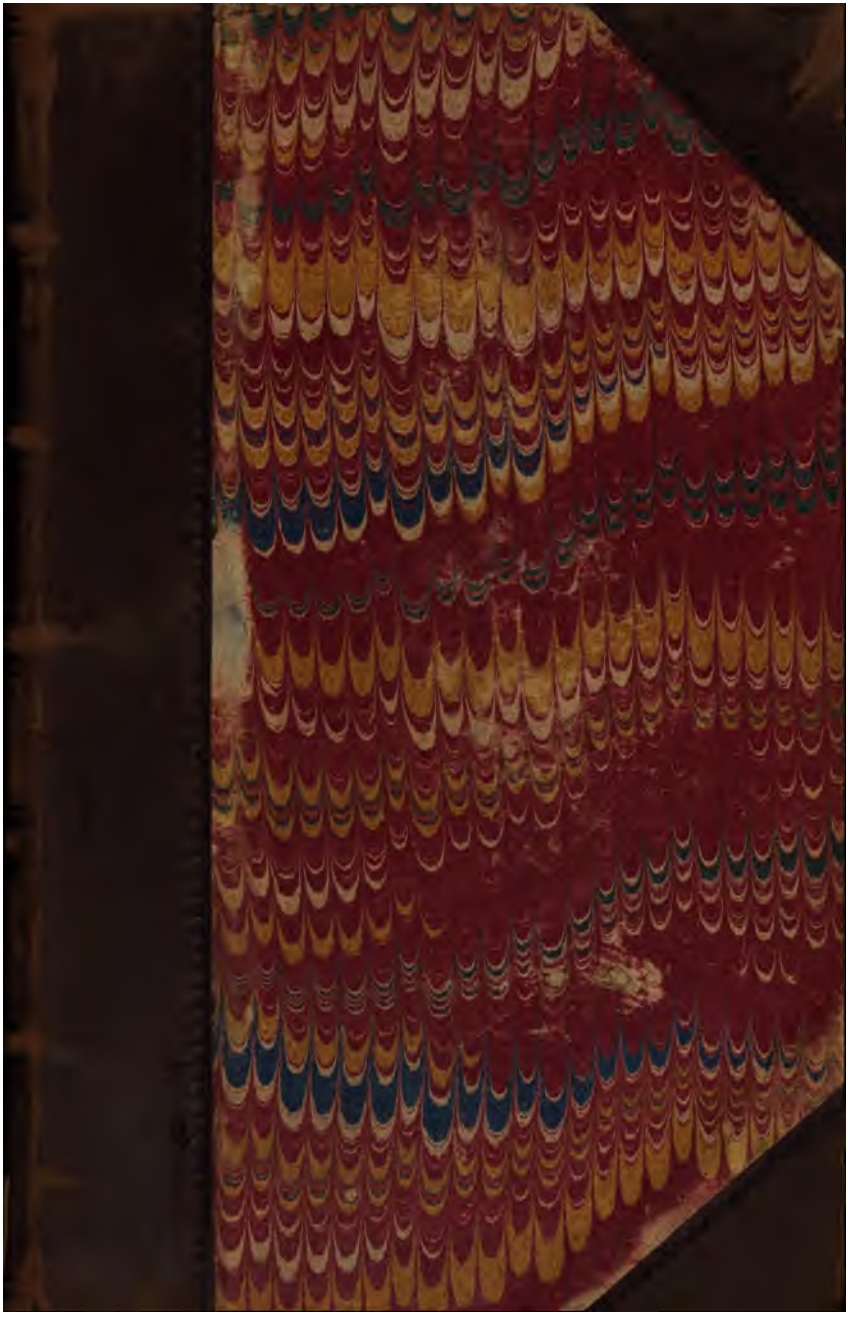

Hugh. H. Jernegan
from E. P.
September. 1854.

SHORT MEDITATIONS

FOR

EVERY DAY IN THE YEAR.

EDITED BY
WALTER FARQUHAR HOOK, D.D.,
VICAR OF LEEDS.

New Edition.

Vol. I.—Advent to Lent.

LEEDS:
RICHARD SLOCOMBE.
LONDON:
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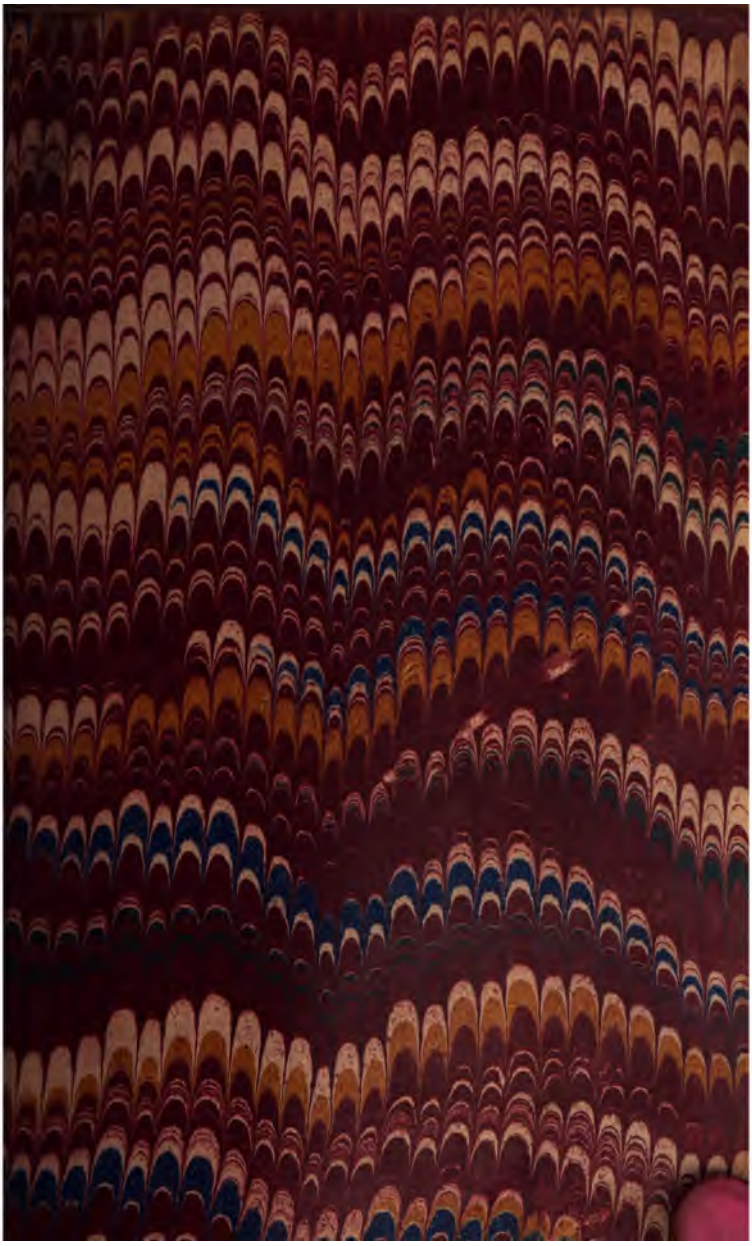
1851.

D.



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TO

MY CHILDREN AND GODCHILDREN

THIS LITTLE WORK

IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED

WITH THE EARNEST HOPE

THAT

THE WORDS OF THEIR MOUTHS

AND

THE MEDITATIONS OF THEIR HEARTS

MAY BE ALWAYS ACCEPTABLE

IN THE SIGHT OF

HIM

THEIR STRENGTH

AND THEIR REDEEMER.

ADVENT, 1846.

PREFACE.

THAT our Holy Religion is not to every one, even of those who are under its influence, all that Christianity must be when it is realized in the heart, is a fact which many will lament and few deny. And when this is the case it must be attributed to the fact that the verities of the Gospel have not been sufficiently brought before the mind and impressed upon the soul. And this again is to be traced to want of meditation; it is by meditation that the soul penetrates the infinite wonders of the eternal kingdom; it is to meditation that we must have recourse for the opening of our spiritual eyes, the enlarging of our ideas, and the centering of all our energies and our knowledge on the things belonging to God.

Meditation being then necessary for maintaining our spiritual vitality, the question is, how shall we best set about performing it?

Several points must be observed on entering upon a systematic course of meditation.

First. It must be regular as to time and place: the morning is considered the best time thus to elevate the mind towards God; and the place and position in which meditation is to be made ought to be fixed.

Secondly. There should be uniformity in plan; we ought not to wander about the verdant fields of Scripture plucking a flower here and there, as fancy dictates; but we ought to walk soberly and steadily on, passing by no object of attention, and thus becoming acquainted with every turn and winding, with every hill and valley on our way. Take for instance the Creed; the Lord's Prayer; the Lessons for the day: some plan we must have, or our

meditations will soon be the barren and fruitless descanting of the mind on a favourite text.

Thirdly. The meditation must be begun with fervent prayer and ended in the same manner; we must pray against our own weakness, pray for grace, for strength, for assistance — "except the LORD build the house their labour is but lost that build it."

Fourthly. We must bend all our faculties, intellectual, moral, and spiritual, to the work; the will must assist, the reason must be used, to draw as much profit from the meditation as possible. And from first to last we must ever be realizing, as vividly as our minds will permit, the presence of Almighty GOD Himself; we must fall low on our knees before His footstool, and see Him sitting in majesty surrounded by the angels, watching every thought, every look, every motion, and sending the aid of His Blessed Spirit to fertilize and refresh the

barren soul before Him: then may we see the heavenly messenger standing over us, and as each thought and holy aspiration is brought forth, winging his way to present it before that throne, where CHRIST, our great Mediator and Intercessor, sits to add His merits to our desires and prayers.

We will suppose that the subject has been chosen some time during the day before, and that the mind is duly prepared by such study of the passage as is in our power. We place ourselves in the appointed place and position; closing our eyes, we bring before our minds the presence of GOD, Who is watching us, and is ready to send us the aid which we ask for with earnest reality. Being in the presence of the Most High, how can we but bewail our own weakness for the work, pray for His strength, His grace; professing full faith in His mighty power, and praying for His blessing on our meditation.

Then let us slowly and reverently repeat the text which has been chosen, and to the best of our ability draw out its full meaning; if the subject admits of a *picture*, let us bring before our eyes the scene which the text represents, supposing that we are spectators. Let us endeavour to extract the fruit from our subject, by deducing the instruction to be derived from it; and here let us bring out our own sins and infirmities, and see which is to be amended by the particular subject on hand. We may address our own souls solemnly and earnestly, endeavouring to heighten our feelings of love for the SAVIOUR Whose compassion made it possible that such sins, such infirmities could be forgiven, and to increase our admiration and eagerness for the virtue, or our detestation of the vice.

Let us conclude with prayer that our Blessed SAVIOUR will amend our purposes and strengthen our resolutions. Let us carry about with us during the day, the

subject of our Meditation, and endeavour practically to profit by it, by cultivating the virtue we have therein contemplated.

The following Meditations are intended as a help to beginners, to young people, and to those, whose duty in this state of life leaves them little or no time for carrying out the practice of meditation. They should be used in the manner before explained; the prayers supplied where there are none given, according to the wants of each individual. They must be used with the whole soul intently fixed on the subject; with heart lifted up to God; and must be repeated slowly, sentence by sentence, with a pause between each, and with a recollection of the wants, wishes, and spiritual deficiences of the person who uses them.

May God's blessing rest upon those who desire to meditate, and upon this attempt to supply their need. May we all learn, as we walk onward in our pilgrimage, how

blessed it is to retire into a solitary place to pray. Oh! may we find the inestimable privilege of knowing our Blessed SAVIOUR — of gazing upon Him, our dear and loving Master — of watching with Him.

The quotations from Scripture, and from several authors, are not acknowledged in this little work; it does not pretend to literary merit; and it was thought that allusions to the passages quoted, might distract the mind from the entirely devotional spirit with which it ought to be used.

VICARAGE, LEEDS,
ADVENT, 1846.

SHORT MEDITATIONS,

ETC.

First Sunday in Advent.

BLESSED IS HE THAT COMETH IN THE NAME OF THE LORD.
Matt. xxi. 9.

BE present with me, O LORD, and grant, I humbly beseech Thee, that the meditations of my heart may be acceptable in Thy sight, O Thou, my strength and my REDEEMER!

Our Blessed LORD commands His disciples to fetch Him an ass and an ass's colt. They, not knowing what His gracious intentions are, do as they are commanded; and finding that the colt is to bear the blessed weight of our LORD's Body, they endeavour to make the seat as honourable

as possible, by placing their clothes on the creature's back. Behold our Lord sitting as a meek King upon the animal which is the type of patience and humility! He proceeds towards Jerusalem. He is met by multitudes. Behold with what calm majesty He looks upon them, and silently blesses them! Those God-like and gracious looks inspire the mixed multitudes with enthusiasm. They spread their garments for Him to pass over; they strew His road with branches of trees; and they exclaim, Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord! Hosanna! Oh! words of high import uttered by ignorant lips! Adore, O my soul, the Most High God, Who thus, out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, has perfected praise!

This first entry of our Lord into Jerusalem is a type and foreshadowing of His second coming, with this difference: He then came, our God, but in the meekness and lowliness of His manhood; He will hereafter come, the Son of Man, but in the power of His Godhead. He then came a Saviour; He will hereafter come as the Judge. The colt is a type of the Church, pure and without blemish, purged for His use. The

garments placed thereon are the deeds of righteousness of His chosen servants and ministers; those strewed before Him are the prayers and praises of the saints, which will go before and prevent His coming. O my soul, think upon the second coming of Thy LORD! Art thou prepared to meet Him? Dost thou remember that He will come as a thief in the night? Cast off, therefore, the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light. Put on the LORD JESUS CHRIST. Watch and be sober.

Here say Collect for first Sunday in Advent.

ALMIGHTY GOD, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which Thy Son JESUS CHRIST came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when He shall come again in His glorious Majesty to judge both the quick and dead, we may rise to the life immortal, through Him Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the HOLY GHOST, now and ever. *Amen.*

Monday

AFTER FIRST SUNDAY.

MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED THE HOUSE OF PRAYER, BUT YE HAVE MADE IT A DEN OF THIEVES.
Matt. xxi. 13.

OUR blessed LORD, when He went up to Jerusalem before the Passover, on going to the Temple, found the courts occupied by those who sold animals for the sacrifices, and by changers of money. Filled with holy indignation that His FATHER'S House should be desecrated by traffic and worldly business, He drove them thence, and said, "It is written, 'My house shall be called the house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves.'"

When we consider the love and admiration with which the Jews regarded their holy and beautiful house, and the feelings expressed at its dedication, and at its restoration under Ezra and Nehemiah, the wickedness of those Jews who thus turned their FATHER'S house into a house of merchandize is very striking. The visible

presence of God was vouchsafed in the Temple built by Solomon, and very solemn is the account of it. After Solomon's beautiful and affecting prayer of dedication, which asked a blessing upon the different kinds of supplication to be offered in that house, and which ends:—

"Now therefore arise, O Lord God, into Thy resting place, Thou, and the ark of Thy strength: let Thy priests, O Lord God, be clothed with salvation, and Thy saints rejoice in goodness. O Lord God, turn not away the face of Thine Anointed: remember the mercies of David Thy servant:"—

Holy Scripture goes on to say:

"Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt-offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the Lord filled the house."

We blame the Jews, but, O my soul, dost thou not see that thou art in the same condemnation? Thou dost not, it is true, buy and sell in thy temple, and thou mayest say, We see no longer the glory of the Lord filling our house of prayer; yet thou art told by the voice of inspiration, that we have the Omnipresent God peculiarly with us in our dedicated houses of

prayer; one full, perfect and sufficient Sacrifice has been offered for us; and *our* High Priest is holy, harmless, undefiled.

Consider this, then, and blush when thou rememberest the traffic thou hast set up, in thy house of prayer, of worldly thoughts, straying looks, unseemly gestures. Resolve that from henceforth, whenever thou settest thy foot in God's church, thou keep thyself as in the immediate presence of God. Bow in thine heart, if not in outward gesture, to the holiest place therein, even the altar, on which is commemorated the most sacred mystery of His Passion; and let no light thoughts or unholy words and looks intrude themselves, lest thou suddenly remember that what ought to be the house of God thou hast made into a den of thieves.

Say Psalm lxxxiv.

O HOW amiable are Thy dwellings: Thou Lord of hosts.

My soul hath a desire and longing to enter into the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh rejoice in the Living God.

Yea, the sparrow hath found her an house, and the swallow a nest where she may lay her

young: even Thy altars, O LORD of hosts, my King and my GOD.

Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house: they will be alway praising Thee.

Blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee: in whose heart are Thy ways.

Who going through the vale of misery use it for a well: and the pools are filled with water.

They will go from strength to strength: and unto the GOD of gods appeareth every one of them in Sion.

O LORD GOD of hosts, hear my prayer: hearken, O GOD of Jacob.

Behold, O GOD our defender: and look upon the face of Thine Anointed.

For one day in Thy courts: is better than a thousand.

I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my GOD: than to dwell in the tents of ungodliness.

For the Lord GOD is a light and defence: the LORD will give grace and worship, and no good thing shall He withhold from them that live a godly life.

O LORD GOD of hosts: blessed is the man that putteth his trust in Thee.

Tuesday.

AFTER FIRST SUNDAY.

—WHO IS THIS? AND THE MULTITUDE SAID, THIS IS JESUS THE PROPHET OF NAZARETH OF GALILEE.
Matt. xxi. 10, 11.

IN the presence of God, the Blessed and Glorious TRINITY, I prostrate myself; and implore pity for my unworthiness, help for my weakness, and pardon for my numberless misdeeds.

Who is this? Picture to yourself the meek and lowly Man, humbly clad, but with so majestic an expression, so kind so loving an aspect, that you do not for an instant take him for a mere man; you see the Divine Nature shining through the veil of flesh which he has vouchsafed to assume. Again I say, Who is this? This is JESUS the SAVIOUR, Who is come to save His people from their sins. This is JESUS, Who left the Bosom of His FATHER, took upon Him our nature, was tempted, scorned, reviled, sorrowful, agonized, spit upon, buffeted, scourged,

bound, mocked, stripped, beaten, crowned with thorns, CRUCIFIED!

Behold the Man! O my soul, bow down before the Holy JESUS; weep with tenderest pity; melt with fervent love; worship thy Divine Master!

O Thou beloved Spouse of my soul, JESUS CHRIST! Thou most pure Love; Thou LORD of all creation; Oh! that I had wings of true liberty, that I might flee away and rest in Thee!

Oh! when shall it be fully granted me to consider in quietness of mind how sweet Thou art, my LORD GOD!

Grant me, O most sweet and loving JESUS, to trust in Thee above all creatures, above all health and beauty, above all glory and honour, above all power and dignity, above all knowledge and subtlety, above all riches and arts, above all joy and gladness, above all fame and praise, above all sweetness and comfort, above all hope and promise, above all desert and desire.

Above all gifts and presents that Thou canst give and impart unto us; above all mirth and jubilee that the mind can receive and feel.

Finally, above angels and archangels, and above all the heavenly host; above all visible

and invisible things, and above all that Thou art not, O my God!

The spirit and the bride say, Come; and let him that heareth, say, Come. And let him that is athirst, come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

Surely, I come quickly: Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, be with me. *Amen.*

Wednesday.

AFTER FIRST SUNDAY.

WASH YOU, MAKE YOU CLEAN; PUT AWAY THE EVIL OF YOUR DOINGS FROM BEFORE MINE EYES; CEASE TO DO EVIL.—Is. i. 16.

LET me, this day, consider this passage as regards myself and my own conduct. The command is positive, without limitation and without exception. Wash you, you are unclean; therefore take the steps commanded by God for the purifying of your soul; "wash you."

In this command I understand the necessity of Baptism; I am to be washed and purified, and then to live as becomes a clean and pure person. I am to have no more communication with evil doings.

This cleansing process I have undergone; grant, Lord, that I may keep my garments undefiled! but to put away the evil of my doings I find not so easy. This requires the constant watchfulness, for evil is present with me.

"For I delight in the law of God, after the

inward man; but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin."

"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

"I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

Through the might of the Lord Jesus therefore, I shall be not made clean only, but kept so. Grant, merciful Lord, that I may have grace and strength to put away the evil of my doings; that I may, day by day, become more recollected, more watchful over my thoughts, words and actions; let me begin, this very moment, to combat those many failings, which hinder me so much in running the race of my salvation: and I here resolve to combat steadily against the fault of ( ). I will cultivate the contrary virtue ( ), at all times and in all manners; especially by ( ). I will make an especial prayer, at all my fixed hours of devotion, against that fault. Oh, be Thou with me, most Holy Life-giving Spirit, to assist me in rooting out this, and all my other occasions of evil, until I may feel more obedient to Thy blessed commands.

Say Psalm li.

HAVE mercy upon me, O God, after Thy great goodness: according to the multitude of Thy mercies do away mine offences.

Wash me throughly from my wickedness: and cleanse me from my sin.

For I acknowledge my faults: and my sin is ever before me.

Against Thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight: that Thou mightest be justified in Thy saying, and clear when Thou art judged.

Behold, I was shapen in wickedness: and in sin hath my mother conceived me.

But lo, Thou requirest truth in the inward parts: and shalt make me to understand wisdom secretly.

Thou shalt purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: Thou shalt wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

Thou shalt make me hear of joy and gladness: that the bones which Thou hast broken may rejoice.

Turn Thy face from my sins: and put out all my misdeeds.

Make me a clean heart, O God: and renew a right spirit within me.

Cast me not away from Thy presence: and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.

O give me the comfort of Thy help again: and stablish me with Thy free Spirit.

Then shall I teach Thy ways unto the wicked: and sinners shall be converted unto Thee.

Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, Thou That art the God of my health: and my tongue shall sing of Thy righteousness.

Thou shalt open my lips, O Lord: and my mouth shall shew Thy praise.

For Thou desirest no sacrifice, else would I give it Thee: but Thou delightest not in burnt offerings.

The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit: a broken and contrite heart, O God, shalt Thou not despise.

O be favourable and gracious unto Sion: build Thou the walls of Jerusalem.

Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifice of righteousness, with the burnt-offerings and oblations: then shall they offer young bullocks upon Thine altar.

Thursday.

AFTER FIRST SUNDAY.

THE NIGHT IS FAR SPENT, THE DAY IS AT HAND.—
Rom. xiii. 12.

BE with me, O God, in this my meditation, and let me do nothing idly, or unprofitably for my soul.

The "night" I will first consider as the state of the world before the Sun of Righteousness arose with healing on His wings; and very dreadful are the descriptions of that darkness contained in the Holy Scripture. The whole of the Old Testament is a record of sin, sorrow, and misery. "Behold," says the Prophet, "darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people." But he goes on to say: "The Lord shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee." The day dawned, and "through the tender mercy of our God, the Day Star from on high hath visited us."

Consider, and carry on thy thoughts, O my

soul, to the second coming of our LORD. Alas! darkness has again covered the earth, and gross darkness the people. He came unto His own, and His own received him not. The LORD whom ye seek, shall *suddenly* come to His temple. Suddenly? Then, indeed, is the night far spent; the day may be at hand, yea, even at the door. But, who may abide the day of His coming; and who may stand when He appeareth?

Purify me, O my GOD! and let me partake of Thy precious promises; let me go on in the path of holiness, that I may be enabled to abide the day of Thy coming. In myself I am weak, yielding to every temptation, and falling short in every good resolution; but let Thy grace be sufficient for me; support me, day by day, with fresh supplies of grace, and enable me to contemplate the brightness of Thy rising.

How overwhelming are the precious words of Thy SPIRIT, spoken by Isaiah the Prophet, which describe the joys in store for those who love Thy appearance!

"The sun shall be no more thy light by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee; but the LORD shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy GOD thy glory.

"The sun shall no more go down; neither shall the moon withdraw itself; for the LORD shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended."

Oh! how, after thinking on this glorious prospect, can I return to sin and worldly vanities? Grant me, LORD, Thy gracious help: oh! save me, for Thy mercy's sake.

ALMIGHTY GOD, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which Thy Son JESUS CHRIST came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when He shall come again in His glorious Majesty to judge both the quick and dead, we may rise to the life immortal, through Him Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the HOLY GHOST, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Friday

AFTER FIRST SUNDAY

LET US THEREFORE CAST OFF THE WORKS OF DARKNESS, AND LET US PUT ON THE ARMOUR OF LIGHT.
Rom. xiii. 12.

THE object of all my devotional exercises, at this season of Advent, ought to be to prepare my soul for the due celebration of the festival commemorating our blessed LORD's first coming into the world, that it may be in a fit state to abide the day of His second coming; which, it is revealed, is to happen suddenly, and therefore may come to pass at any moment. At this very moment, perhaps to-morrow, I may hear the trump of the Archangel! My soul, dost thou realize this awful fact? As a matter of revelation my reason assents thereto; but all things go on as they have hitherto done; I am lulled into the security that in my day this dread event will not take place, and I fear that I may be living in a state of practical unbelief of the great truth.

Have I cast away the works of darkness? Let

me consider what are works of darkness. All works which are contrary to the will of God. The armour of light is put on by the assistance of God's Holy and Blessed Spirit. If I avail myself of it, I have had the gift of that Holy Life-giving Spirit. But have I entirely cast away all works of darkness, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, the pride of life? If I am not swollen with pride, do I so entirely renounce all thought and care of self as to be truly and entirely humble? If I am not eaten up with envy, do I never regret the condition or state in which I am placed by God's providence? If I am not carried away by wrath, do I never give way to causeless movements of annoyance? If I am not tempted to gluttony, do I never lay too much stress upon my own ease and comfort? If I am not harassed by too great fondness for riches, do I always do good and distribute as is my bounden duty? If I am not taking my portion with the sluggard, do I always exert myself to the extent of my ability; and do I take as much pains in the service of God and my neighbours, as I do to minister to my own pleasure, ease, and comfort?

My soul, thou canst not say that all works of darkness are cast from thee, or that thou art fully

arrayed in the armour of light. Shame on thee, slothful soul! Thou knowest the night is far spent, and that a bright and glorious day is at hand, and yet thou pursuest a course which will turn that brightness into cloud and darkness and misery and woe for thee. Cast off, fling away all works of darkness; come boldly forward, break the chains of thy sins, put on that armour of light which will be a panoply of proof against all the fiery darts of the wicked; and then, instead of fearing and dreading the second coming of thy Lord, thou wilt long for His appearing; for then thou wilt finally and for ever lose the fear of those works of darkness, against which thou hast been struggling; thou wilt be purged and purified and made fit to meet thy Lord. O Blessed Lord, grant that this may be so! Give me grace that I may cast away the works of darkness and put upon me the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which Thy Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when He shall come again in His glorious Majesty to judge both the quick and dead, we may rise to the life immortal, through Him Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, now and ever. *Amen.*

Saturday

AFTER FIRST SUNDAY.

BUT PUT YE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.—Rom. xiii. 14.

WHAT a blessed conclusion to the meditations of the week, is this injunction to put on the LORD JESUS CHRIST! I know that when I am looking forward to any object with an intense desire of attaining it, I forego all other objects of desire, and bend all my faculties to that one object. I am now looking forward to the coming of our LORD — I intensely and fervently desire to behold Him, as my gracious loving SAVIOUR; and that being my desire, I must leave all other objects, must make no provision for the flesh, and I must endeavour to *put on* the LORD JESUS CHRIST. I have been baptised into CHRIST, I have put on CHRIST; but I have miserably fallen away in many ways, by thought, word and deed, from my Divine Master. But, O LORD! I return unto Thee, with my whole heart; I fervently desire to be wholly Thine; and, although I detect my daily, my

hourly failings, yet Thou art gracious and merciful; Thou knowest my heart, Thou knowest my desire of serving Thee; oh! forsake me not, utterly; cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me; but renew me, day by day, in righteousness and true holiness. Oh! come unto me, gracious Saviour! Assist me, weak and failing creature that I am, and hearken to the voice of my ardent desire to be Thine, wholly Thine; to seek nought else, none else than Thee. And if it shall please Thee, shew me Thy Face, all bright with glory and mercy, at the time when Thou comest with Thy holy angels, to judge the quick and dead. Then take me, gracious Lord, in with Thee, unto Thy marriage; and grant me a place at Thy right hand—under Thy feet—in the last and lowest place, if only with Thee, Who art my all; and Whom I desire to serve, to love, to worship, to adore unto endless ages. O, give me a love to Thee, that I may love Thee as well as any of Thy servants loved Thee; according to that love, which Thou, by the sacrament of love, workest in Thy secret ones.

Give unto Thy servant such a love, that whatsoever in Thy service may happen contrary to

flesh and blood, I may not feel it; that when I labour, I may not be weary; when I am despised, I may not regard it; that adversity may be tolerable, and humility may be my sanctuary; and mortification of my passions, the exercise of my days; and the service of God, the joy of my soul; that loss to me may be gain, so I win CHRIST; and death itself, the entrance of an eternal life, when I may live with the beloved, the joy of my soul, the light of my eyes, my GOD and all things, the Blessed SAVIOUR of the world, my REDEEMER! *Amen.*

Second Sunday in Advent.

THAT WE THROUGH PATIENCE AND COMFORT OF THE SCRIPTURES MIGHT HAVE HOPE.—
Rom. xv. 4.

O THOU, Who hast provided for me, Thine unworthy servant, the assistance of Thy Holy Scriptures; give me grace to meditate on their divine origin and excellence, that my hitherto unprofitable study of the Sacred Book may become more efficacious for the enlightening of my soul!

Let me remember that each word of Holy Scripture was dictated by the direct inspiration of God's Holy Spirit, and is to be received into the faithful heart with humble gratitude. Each part of the Scripture is to be read with the same spirit wherewith it was written; and whether it be for doctrine, for reproof, or for instruction in righteousness that we turn to its sacred pages, all is to be received as a direct communication from

our Heavenly Master. Its very names, the Old Testament, the New Testament, remind us solemnly of our duty as respects it. The last words of our father, of our dearest friend, as contained in his will, are considered in a manner as sacred; we dwell with tender recollection upon the beloved author, and we strain every energy, make any sacrifice to fulfil his will. How much more ought we to prize, to linger, and to endeavour to act upon these Testaments of our God, our dearest and most loving Saviour! Let me, as I enter more deeply into the study of them, burn with more fervent love, with more ardent zeal for the dear Lord and Master Who has left me such an abiding proof of His love.

How glorious is that light which shines in upon our minds by the example of Patriarchs, the revelations of Prophets, the sweet solace of Holy Psalms, the instruction of wise proverbs, the profit and experience of faithful histories. Blessed be Thy Name for this light which no darkness overspreads, this sun which never goes down! God is the Lord who hath shewed us such light. Bind ye the sacrifice with cords; yea, even to the horns of the altar. Open Thou mine eyes that I may see the wondrous things

of Thy law. Take away, O Lord, the veil from my heart while I read the Scriptures. Blessed art Thou, O Lord; teach me Thy statutes!

O Thou, Who touching the lips of the Prophet didst purify him from sin, touch my lips, who am a sinner, set me free from every stain, and make me fit to set forth Thy oracles. Open my mouth wide, O Lord, and do Thou fill it.

BLESSED Lord, Who hast caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning; grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience, and comfort of Thy Holy Word, we may embrace, and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which Thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

Monday

AFTER SECOND SUNDAY.

NOW, THE GOD OF PATIENCE AND CONSOLATION GRANT YOU TO BE LIKE-MINDED ONE TOWARD ANOTHER, ACCORDING TO CHRIST JESUS!—Rom. xv. 5.

BE with me O God, now during this my meditation, and make Thou it profitable to me.

Consider why, in the first place, God in this passage is called especially the God of patience and consolation, and is mentioned in connection with our unity among ourselves: it may possibly mean, that in order to obtain like-mindedness, we must exercise *patience*; and the reward, both of the patience and the unity, will be *consolation!*

Consider, that patience is very necessary in our dealings with men. We have to put up with failings which, perhaps, may peculiarly grate on our own tempers; to exercise forbearance when we witness the failings which we

imagine may work us personal harm: others have to bear the same from us — more, perhaps, than we think, or are aware of; but, if we go on bearing and forbearing, God will at length make it easy to us, — and it may be, that we shall be permitted to enjoy His consolation.

For full and perfect unity we must not look on earth: it is the great distinguishing feature of the heavenly kingdom; perfect harmony, unity and concord, are truly enjoyed by angels and archangels, and all the company of heaven. But, as this unity is prayed for by the apostle, as it is one of the joys of heaven, O my soul, endeavour to draw all thy brethren into this most heavenly state. The thought is overpowering; what joy! what bliss! when every heart clings to God — every eye is fixed on its Saviour—every tongue sings His praises! Even among my own friends, the thought of all whom I love or venerate being joined in perfect oneness of sentiment towards our dear and only Saviour, gives an idea of more true and perfect happiness, than I can hope to see realized until that time when, each in the mansion prepared for us, we shall sing the praises of Him Who has poured His benefits upon us. O my soul, thou mayest

look on the blessed prospect, and then exclaim with the Psalmist:—

Behold, how good and joyful a thing it is: brethren, to dwell together in unity.

It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down unto the beard: even unto Aaron's beard, and went down to the skirts of his clothing.

Like as the dew of Hermon: which fell upon the hill of Sion.

For there the Lord promised His blessing: and life for evermore.

O ALMIGHTY God, Who hast built Thy Church upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the head corner-stone; Grant us so to be joined together in unity of spirit by their doctrine, that we may be made an holy temple acceptable unto Thee: through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Tuesday

AFTER SECOND SUNDAY

AND THEN SHALL THEY SEE THE SON OF MAN COMING IN A CLOUD WITH POWER AND GREAT GLORY. AND WHEN THESE THINGS BEGIN TO COME TO PASS, THEN LOOK UP, AND LIFT UP YOUR HEADS, FOR YOUR REDEMPTION DRAWETH NIGH. — St. Luke. xxxi., 27, 28.

GOD the FATHER, GOD the SON, and GOD the HOLY GHOST, be with me during this my meditations! I am awe-stricken and amazed at the greatness of the subject. Oh! pardon the weakness of my words and the ignorance of my thoughts, and make all that I do profitable for my soul.

I consider, in the first place, the signs of the second coming of the SON of MAN. They are described as principally consisting in a great convulsion of nature; — the sun and moon withdrawing their light, mighty winds and great waters roaring, and — consequent upon these fearful wonders — terror and perplexities, men's

hearts failing them for fear. External things have greater effect upon men's minds than the most extraordinary mental phenomena; and next to the terrors excited by natural objects, we are apt to contract alarm by witnessing terror in others.

Picture to thyself the earth in this state; see the obscurity; hear the fearful sounds; behold terror, wonder, and awe in all faces. Hark! the voice of the Archangel! the trump of God! Fall down — prostrate thyself — behold the Son of Man coming in power and great glory!

(Here pause and, closing thine eyes, bring before thee the scene.)

To those who, having received God's gracious promises, have endeavoured to walk in all His commandments blameless, and going on from strength to strength, have found the nothingness of all earthly things, and have made their God and Saviour their all, the commandment is given, "Look up, and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh." To those who in this world have no abiding city, and who look and long for the coming of their Lord, what glorious words are these, "Thy redemption draweth

nigh!" Health to the sick, liberty to the captive, ease to those in pain, come not with such boundings of joy as do these glad words to the strangers and pilgrims upon earth. O my soul, although thou art overpowered with these thoughts, rouse thyself, and pour out thy most earnest supplications to thy dearest Saviour, thy great and glorious Lord God, that He will grant unto thee such perseverance unto the end, that thou mayest, when He shall come again in glory, look up with steadfast love, and lift up thy head in full confidence that thy redemption is coming. Make thy resolution so to commemorate the nativity of thy Lord, that it may be the commencement of a holier way of living, so that thou mayest be found acceptable in His sight when He shall come again in His glory to judge both the quick and the dead.

O MERCIFUL God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the resurrection and the life; in Whom whosoever believeth shall live, though he die; and whosoever liveth, and believeth in Him, shall not die eternally; Who also hath taught us, by His holy Apostle Saint Paul, not to be sorry, as men without hope, for

them that sleep in Him; we meekly beseech Thee, O Father, to raise us from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness; that when we shall depart this life, we may rest in Him; and that, at the general resurrection in the last day, we may be found acceptable in Thy sight; and receive that blessing, which Thy well-beloved Son shall then pronounce to all that love and fear Thee, saying, Come, ye blessed children of My Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world. Grant this, we beseech Thee, O merciful Father, through Jesus Christ, our Mediator and Redeemer. *Amen.*

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with us all evermore. *Amen.*

Wednesday

AFTER SECOND SUNDAY.

AND THEN SHALL THEY SEE THE SON OF MAN COMING.—Luke, xxi. 27.

I COME into the presence of GOD! O ALMIGHTY FATHER, be with me, I beseech Thee, in this my meditation!

Having considered the signs of the coming of the SON of MAN, I desire not to shrink from bringing before me, as vividly as may be, the end of that fearful subject.

Picture to thyself the valley of Jehosaphat, filled with the countless multitudes of those who ever have been, or ever will be, born upon earth. In order to realize, in a degree, the myriads who will there await their doom, think upon all the armies which have been collected to gratify man's ambition, from the armies of Pharoah to those gathered together in the last war which we read of in history: the fearful trumpet of the angel

has collected all this vast multitude in the valley of decision.

The elect of God — those who have kept their garments undefiled and are washed in the blood of the Lamb, are caught up into the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; but those who are left in the valley, stand trembling to hear their doom. Oh! how inadequate is any language to express the terror, the horrible dread, which those miserable wretches suffer!

Picture to thyself the terrible Judge, now appearing, — before Him borne His standard, even the cross on which He suffered. To the elect how mild and gentle is His aspect! how He turns to them that Divine Countenance which they have so often longed to look upon, on which I now desire to think with devout reverence *(pause)*. How His blessed wounds shine out with brightness and inexpressible beauty, to those who have applied in earnest their wholesome balm to the healing of their souls! To the wicked that aspect is altogether different; how terrible is the Countenance, how awful those wounds to those who have crucified their Lord afresh, and put Him to an open shame!

Then will every fresh circumstance ncrease

the joy of the saints, the agony and terror of the reprobate. Consider, O my soul, the recognition of those whom thou hast loved and lost on earth,—to the reprobate how dreadful, to the elect how unspeakably joyful! Canst thou not, O my soul, call up *one* loved countenance which to see again thou wouldst think more joy than thy mind could bear? Is there not a child, a parent, with whom thou longest to be united?

But, see! the judgment is set, the books are opened. Thou art thyself before the Great Judge: now is every single thought, however passing or trifling, brought to light; every word, every action brought out, and thou standest without plea, without excuse, before Him Who knocked so often at the door of thy heart, and thou wouldst not hear.

O MOST loving and merciful Saviour, most just Judge, I meekly beseech Thee to raise me from the death of sin to the life of righteousness; that, when I shall depart this life, I may rest in hope; and that, at the general resurrection at the last day I may be found acceptable in Thy sight, and receive that blessing, which Thy well beloved Son shall then pronounce to all that love

and fear Thee, saying: "Come, ye blessed children of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world:" Grant this, I beseech Thee, O merciful Father, through Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

Thursday

AFTER SECOND SUNDAY.

YOUR REDEMPTION DRAWETH NIGH.—
St. Luke, xxi. 28.

I COME into the presence of GOD and of the Holy Angels; O LORD, be with me, and let my meditation be useful for the good of my soul!

I have brought before my mind the awful time of CHRIST's second appearing, and am so affected thereby, that I desire to meditate upon the preparations necessary to make me meet my Judge, not as an avenging GOD, but as my most loving SAVIOUR and gracious Master.

Consider what thou shouldst do, if thy greatest benefactor, to whom thou owest every thing, and to whom thou lookest for an increase of benefits, should be coming to visit thee.

In the first place, thou wouldst set thy house in order, and look well to the manners and behaviour of thy family and dependants.—Thy

Benefactor is expected; thou knowest that He is coming, and that He will come without notice; but, whether He will be with thee at this time or weeks hence is uncertain. This uncertainty keeps thee always on the watch. Thy Benefactor will look narrowly into thy private concerns, and will not be pleased if He finds that thou hast neglected any one of His commands. Thou knowest that the reward of thy good conduct will be an amount of happiness, of which thou canst not form any idea.

Thou art consequently always watching. If any disorder occurs in the house, thou art uneasy until it is set straight. Thou art ever teaching and exhorting thy family, and thou art always drest in suitable garments to receive thy Lord. Thou art constantly consulting the Book which contains His directions. Thou hast recourse to the advice and instruction of those who have been appointed by Him as His ministers; and thou keepest up thy strength for the constant anxiety and watchfulness which thou undergoest, by partaking of a particular nourishment which He has given for that purpose.

In a very low degree this gives an idea of the continual state of watchfulness necessary for

those who are expecting their LORD's coming;—not a whit less could be done for a temporal friend, who had happiness and prosperity in his power.

Consider then, O my soul, how thou canst remain in this state of constant watchfulness! It is a state to be prayed for—to be drawn down from heaven, by continued and earnest supplications to the Throne of Grace.

Thy temporal affairs and thy family should always be managed in an orderly systematic manner, so as to leave no anxious thought when the end comes. Transact thy temporal business with all thy might, as unto GOD. Thy spiritual concerns—how carefully wilt thou watch them! how earnestly deplore thy failings! how deeply lament thy shortcomings! and how wilt thou strive to amend all that thou doest amiss! Above all, how wilt thou try to increase thy zeal and love to God! how wilt thou watch for every opportunity of serving Him, and seize every occasion of addressing Him in prayer! And how wilt thou, on every occasion that presents itself, strengthen and refresh thy soul, by partaking of the Holy and Life-giving Sacrament of His Body and Blood! And how after all, wilt thou weep

and lament over thy unworthiness and lukewarmness; for as thou goest on watching, and praying, and hoping, and expecting, thy Lord's coming, thou wilt increase in love, and awe, and admiration, of that adorable Master; and thou wilt fear that, when He comes, thou wilt be too unworthy to lift up thy head in His presence.

O BLESSED Saviour, Who, when Thou shalt, at the last day, come to judge the quick and the dead, wilt render to every one, according to his works, either reward or punishment; give me grace so to pass this earthly pilgrimage according to Thy will, that, at that day, I may be, through Thy merits, thought worthy to be received into Thy heavenly mansion, there to praise and bless Thee with the holy company of the blessed Saints and Angels for evermore. Be merciful to me. *Amen.*

Friday

AFTER SECOND SUNDAY.

YOUR REDEMPTION DRAWETH NIGH.—
St. Luke, xxi. 28.

AGAIN, O my God, I beseech Thy gracious aid in rightly meditating upon the graces particularly requisite to enable me to stand in the day of Thy coming.

Consider, that, besides watchfulness, thou hast need of another great grace — that of love. Thou must cultivate those graces which will fit thee for living for ever with Almighty God; without love thou couldest not endure to be for ever with Him; and, therefore, for this grace thou must send up constant prayers.

Dost thou realize what this love is? I think not. Thou lookest around thee, and seest thyself surrounded with blessings, and wonders, and mercies; and thou liftest up thy heart in thanksgiving to God; but that is not love. No;

perfect love casteth out fear; and until thou art free from all sin, all imperfection, all infirmity, thou must fear. Thou canst, therefore, in this life, only hope for increase of love, which will be perfected in another world. Go on, casting aside all evil thoughts and infirmities of the flesh and of the spirit, and, as thou growest in grace, thou wilt grow in love to God, and in charity to all His creatures. And although, now, with all thy imperfections upon thee, thou canst only cast thyself at the foot of the Throne of Grace, humbly imploring mercy; yet, hereafter, when thy garments are washed in the Blood of the Lamb, thou shalt throw thyself into the Everlasting Arms, entirely dissolved and transported with love to Him, Who has accomplished so unutterably great a work, in the salvation of the soul, which, thou now seest, is too vile and unworthy to be brought into His presence.

O Thou Everlasting Light, surpassing all created lights, cast the beams of Thy brightness from above, which may pierce all the most inward parts of my heart!

Purify, rejoice, enlighten, and enliven my spirit with all the powers thereof, that I may

cleave unto Thee with abundance of joy and triumph!

Oh! when will that blessed and desired hour come, that Thou mayest satisfy me with Thy presence, and Thou mayest be unto me all in all!

Saturday

AFTER SECOND SUNDAY.

YOUR REDEMPTION DRAWETH NIGH.—
St. Luke, xxi. 28.

IN deep humility I bow myself down in the presence of God, and earnestly implore mercy and help.

In meditating upon the necessity of watchfulness and increase of love, as a preparation for the Day of the Lord, I am deeply struck with my own unworthiness, and the impossibility of my attaining these graces in any great degree.

How can I hope to watch always, while I am so easily disturbed by the most trifling accident, while my mind is so led away from God by worldly business — the cares of life — mixing in society, — and by desire to obtain the good opinion of others.

How can my love to God and my Saviour increase, while I am so cold, so dry, so hard

and little affected by unnumbered blessings — mercies without count, and forbearance and long-suffering too great for any but Him to understand? Oh! that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night, for the dulness and stupidity of my affections!

O my soul, thou must rouse thyself to the greatest exertions to shake off thine infirmities, and thou must prostrate thyself in lowliest and most earnest supplications, that God, thy merciful and gracious Father, will hear thy supplications — will accept thy self-abasement, and will come unto thee and help thee.

Thou must indeed despair of attaining to any perfection in the necessary graces — the night is already far spent, the day is at hand. Thou must bewail thy short-coming, the occasions lost, the grace cast aside, thy dull prayers, the dissipation of thy mind, — but thou must lose no more of thy precious time, but exhaust thyself in prayers, in entreaties to thy God, that He will wash thy defiled garments in the Blood of the Lamb — that He will accept the full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice once made for all; and that He will turn His face from thy sins and blot out all thy misdeeds.

Behold, O Lord, I adjudge myself worthy of, and amenable to, and guilty of, eternal punishment; yea, of all the straits of this world.

From Thee, O Lord, I have merited death — from Thee, the Just One; but yet, to Thee, O Lord, I appeal — to Thee, the Merciful One; from the tribunal of Justice to the Mercy-seat of Grace.

Permit, O Lord, this appeal: if Thou dost not, we perish!

And, O Lord, carest Thou not that we perish?

Thou, Who wilt have all men to be saved;

Who art not willing that any should perish?

Behold me, O Lord, condemned by my own judgment;

Behold me, and enter not Thou, O Lord, into judgment with Thy servant!

Lord! O Lord! be merciful — merciful unto me, of sinners the greatest!

Lord! let Thy mercy rejoice against Thy justice in my sin!

O my Lord, where sin hath abounded, there let grace more exceedingly abound!

O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, hearken, and do!

Defer not, for Thine Own sake, O my God!

Third Sunday in Advent.

AND THE WHOLE MULTITUDE OF THE PEOPLE WERE PRAYING WITHOUT AT THE TIME OF INCENSE. AND THERE APPEARED UNTO HIM AN ANGEL OF THE LORD STANDING ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE ALTAR OF INCENSE.—Luke, i. 10, 11.

GRANT me, I humbly beseech Thee, O LORD, Thy gracious help, that this meditation may be useful for my soul's health!

I picture to myself the magnificent temple; elevated, before the vail, is the altar of incense; before that altar kneels the aged form of the priest Zacharias; he is earnestly and devoutly praying for the whole multitude of the people, who are standing without — for the whole kingdom of Israel. Perchance he mingles with these, a petition for his wife, and one oft repeated supplication that it might please the LORD to bless him with a child; — above all, he prays for the coming of the MESSIAH — the long-expected SAVIOUR, who was to deliver Irsael from all his

sins. Suddenly he sees an angel standing by him. He fears — he trembles — falls prostrate before his heavenly visitor. The text says not that the angel *came*, but that he *appeared*.

There are now only two weeks before we shall celebrate the festival of the Nativity of the Lord; and I desire so to consider the course of events which preceded that occurrence, that I may more fully realize the joy of that celebration, and kneel with devouter love by the cradle at Bethlehem. I think I see, in this passage, that a more special blessing attends the prayers offered up by God's ministers at the hours appointed by the Church; and that angels are more particularly present to carry up the sacrifices of prayer and praise then offered by the priest, and to which hang, as it were, the supplications of the whole multitude.

Consider this, O my soul, and let it be a constant incitement to thee never to forsake the house of thy God, when opportunity offers for thee to join thy prayers with those of the priest, and of all thy fellow Christians. Never omit to offer thy prayers, insignificant as they may be, for thy Israel; the country which thou oughtest to love, and the Zion which has been to thee

as a tender mother; and with all thy powers exclaim, Oh! how amiable are Thy dwellings, thou Lord of Hosts! my soul hath a desire and longing to enter into the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh rejoice in the Living God.

Especially, when thou kneelest at the altar, thou mayest, while the priest is sending up earnest prayers for the multitude, see with the eye of faith, the angel standing by him, so near, that his devout breathings "ruffle the wings prepared for instant aid;" and then wilt thou more fervently join in the praises of the Church, when "with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify His glorious name; evermore praising Him, and saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts, heaven and earth are full of Thy glory: Glory be to Thee, O Lord Most High. *Amen.*"

O LORD Jesu Christ, Who at Thy first coming didst send Thy Messenger to prepare Thy way before Thee: Grant that the ministers and stewards of Thy mysteries may likewise so prepare and make ready Thy way, by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the

wisdom of the just, that at Thy second coming to judge the world we may be found an acceptable people in Thy sight, Who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Spirit, ever One God, world without end. *Amen.*

Monday

AFTER THIRD SUNDAY.

FEAR NOT, ZACHARIAS: FOR THY PRAYER IS HEARD; AND THY WIFE ELIZABETH SHALL BEAR THEE A SON, AND THOU SHALT CALL HIS NAME JOHN. AND THOU SHALT HAVE JOY AND GLADNESS; AND MANY SHALL REJOICE AT HIS BIRTH. —St. Luke, i. 13, 14.

SEND me Thy gracious help, O LORD, that, notwithstanding the dulness of my understanding and the deadness of my affections, I may meditate upon this passage of Holy Scripture profitably.

I again bring before me the picture of Zacharias, kneeling before the altar of incense; the angel standing by, and he in great fear. I hear the angel say, "Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard." It may be that the prayer was to ask for a deliverer to Israel; and, in his love for his people, Zacharias may have devoutly wished to have been, in some manner, instru-

mental to that deliverance. The angel said, "Fear not, Zacharias; thou hast not asked presumptuously or amiss; for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name, John." Wonderful announcement, and beyond the power of human thought to conceive! Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear! Break forth into singing and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child! God, even the Almighty Lord, has promised thee a child, and has given it a name, even John. Another proof of His exceeding bounty, for the interpretation of that name is "One in whom is grace." The angel promises that Zacharias shall have joy and gladness; and that many shall rejoice at his birth. The joy and gladness in store for Zacharias are indeed beyond the expression of mortal lips; he had the sweet comfort of giving a father's love to his first-born child; but, far higher joy than this, he had the high honour, the inestimable privilege, of beholding his son gifted with the grace of God, and fulfilling the ministry, which Holy Scripture had foretold would devolve upon the messenger, who should go before the face of the Lord to prepare His way.

My soul, put thyself in the place of Zacharias. Thou art ever looking for and hasting unto the coming of thy Lord. See the angel standing by thee, whenever thou kneelest in prayer; hear him say unto thee, "Fear not, thy prayer is heard:" — thou shalt have grace given thee; the messenger shall be sent to thee; see thou entertain him well, and then shalt thou have joy and gladness—not only in celebrating thy Saviour's nativity, but in hoping for thy dear Lord's second appearance on earth.

O Lord Jesu Christ, Who at Thy first coming didst send Thy messenger to prepare Thy way before Thee: Grant that the ministers and stewards of Thy mysteries may likewise so prepare and make ready Thy way, by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, that at Thy second coming to judge the world we may be found an acceptable people in Thy sight, Who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Spirit, ever One God, world without end. *Amen.*

Tuesday

AFTER THIRD SUNDAY.

FOR HE SHALL BE GREAT IN THE SIGHT OF THE LORD, AND SHALL DRINK NEITHER WINE NOR STRONG DRINK; AND HE SHALL BE FILLED WITH THE HOLY GHOST, EVEN FROM HIS MOTHER'S WOMB. — St. Luke, i. 15.

O GRACIOUS LORD, send down Thy Holy Spirit into my heart, that I may be enabled rightly to meditate; and do Thou vouchsafe that this sacred exercise may be for the good of my soul!

The angel still speaks to Zacharias; and tells him, that the promised child shall be great in the sight of the LORD, This is not greatness, as men reckon greatness; not the greatness of a conqueror, nor of a statesman, nor of a mighty man of this world; but he was to be great in soul — in virtue; and as the angel goes on to enumerate the internal qualifications which were to fit the child to preach "Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand," he says, that

"he in whom is grace" was "to drink neither wine nor strong drink;" that is, was to abstain from all fleshly lust, and to live a life of strictness and self-denial; and thus, says the holy angel, "he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb."

Now must the heart of Zacharias have been filled with joy and gladness, indeed! His son was to have the gift of the Holy Ghost; not, as others, after they had been in the world for some time, but from his mother's womb! The babe leapt when he heard the salutation of the Blessed Virgin; was not he even then filled with the Holy Ghost? O wonderful goodness and bounty of our God, to vouchsafe to shew us, here and there, glimpses of the mighty workings of His divine scheme!

But let me now consider how I can make this narrative as a pattern, whereby to guide my soul into a way of preparation for our Lord. To be great in the sight of the Lord! to have great virtue, greatness of soul! *My* soul—oh! how impure, how contracted, how mean it is to be brought into the sight of the Lord! The pure in spirit shall see God, and therefore must be in His sight. Lord! for Thy tender mercy's sake,

cleanse me and purify me; take from me every thought, every desire, every wish, but what is according to Thy will; bring me down to nothing, that I may re-edify my soul with Thy Spirit — with love to Thee, and desire of Thy gracious presence.

I was filled with the Holy Ghost at my baptism; but the Spirit has been done despite unto, and I am everything but what I ought to be. O Heavenly Father! with intensest desire, with most earnest supplication, I entreat Thee to come down into this my hardened flinty heart, and grant me the aid of Thy Holy Spirit to purify me for Thyself. John was to drink neither wine nor strong drink. Grant that I may cast aside all love of the world, all luxury; and, going out of myself, may live entirely in Thee. While I pray for this for myself, grant also to ( ) that they may in like manner be made great in Thy sight; that they may drink neither wine nor strong drink; and that they may be filled with the Holy Ghost!

Pardon, Lord, if in these my meditations and supplications, I have thought or asked anything presumptuously or amiss. Thou seest my heart;

O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! Hearken, O Lord, and do! Defer not, O Lord my God!

O LORD Jesu Christ, Who at Thy first coming didst send Thy messenger to prepare Thy way before Thee: Grant that the ministers and stewards of Thy mysteries may likewise so prepare and make ready Thy way, by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, that at Thy second coming to judge the world we may be found an acceptable people in Thy sight, Who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Spirit ever One God, world without end. *Amen.*

Wednesday

AFTER THIRD SUNDAY.

AND HE SHALL GO BEFORE HIM IN THE SPIRIT AND POWER OF ELIAS, TO TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS TO THE CHILDREN, AND THE DISOBEDIENT TO THE WISDOM OF THE JUST; TO MAKE A PEOPLE PREPARED FOR THE LORD.—St. Luke, i. 17.

I COME into the presence of GOD, beseeching Him to be with me in my meditation.

In this passage, which describes more fully the character of the duties to be performed by GOD's chosen messenger, is an allusion to the prophecy of Malachi, which, passing on from the messenger of our LORD's first coming, speaks of the forerunner of His second advent — the prophet Elijah.

At the first appearance of our LORD upon earth, one was to precede Him in "the spirit and power of Elias;" at the second coming Elias himself will go before his LORD to prepare His way.

John was to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just. This describes the dreadful state of confusion and disorder which prevailed. Every one did what was right in his own eyes; they were groping about in thick darkness, gross darkness had entered the minds of the people, when God's messenger came among them, to prepare them for the great Light Which was to shine out upon them, and Which would have blinded them with the excess of Its glory, had It come upon them unprepared. Those who loved the Light were to be made ready for the Lord.

We know that *thousands* heard the preaching of John; *many* followed him, but not all, nor indeed any great proportion. How strange does this seem, looking out, as people were at this time, for the Messiah! How much more astonishing is it, that now, *we*, who have so much greater light, should be living in careless forgetfulness that, even now, our Lord may be at our door — even now, Elijah may be among us!

Why do I say *we?* Thou, O my soul, art walking, if not in darkness, yet as if despising the Light. Thou must look around thee, on all

sides of thee, for the messenger sent to thee; for, if thou shouldest not see the day of Elijah, God will surely send His messenger to warn thee of His approach, for the day of thy death will be to thee that of His second coming. O my soul, think well if thou hast had this awful messenger to turn thee from disobedience to the wisdom of the just; thy sickness, thy sorrow, nay, even thy very joy and prosperity, may be intended as the messenger to soften thee, and make thee impressible with the image of thy Maker. If this be so, then, gracious Lord, give me a seeing eye and a hearing ear, that I may be able to understand Thy warnings, and may be found at the last day one of the people, whose disobedient heart has been turned to the everlasting wisdom, and to whom God's messenger has not spoken in vain.

O LORD Jesu Christ, Who at Thy first coming didst send Thy messenger to prepare Thy way before Thee: Grant that the ministers and stewards of Thy mysteries may likewise so prepare and make ready Thy way, by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the

wisdom of the just, that at Thy second coming to judge the world we may be found an acceptable people in Thy sight, Who livest and reignest with the FATHER and the HOLY SPIRIT, ever One GOD, world without end. *Amen.*

Thursday

AFTER THIRD SUNDAY.

AND THOU, CHILD, SHALT BE CALLED THE PROPHET OF THE HIGHEST: FOR THOU SHALT GO BEFORE THE FACE OF THE LORD TO PREPARE HIS WAYS; TO GIVE KNOWLEDGE OF SALVATION UNTO HIS PEOPLE BY THE REMISSION OF SINS.—St. Luke, i. 76, 77.

I BESEECH Thee, O LORD, to aid me in my poor, weak efforts, for the edification of my soul; to this end be pleased to make my meditation useful!

The angel, having finished his communication to Zacharias, departed from him. I now desire to bring before me the scene, when, Elizabeth having brought forth her son, all the neighbours and friends are gathered together, on the eighth day, for the circumcising the infant. I picture to myself the admiration with which all beholders see the new-born babe, and how they congratulate the mother on her great happiness. They all wish to call the child after his father;

but Elizabeth said, "Not so; his name is John;" and on Zacharias being referred to, he wrote down, "His name is John." The firm and unhesitating faith which dictated these words had their reward; immediately his tongue was loosed, and he spake and praised God. He then, being filled with the Holy Ghost, burst forth into that prophetic hymn, which it is our privilege to have in our Office for Morning Prayer. In this hymn, Zacharias, after blessing the Lord God of Israel for fulfilling, in so marvellous a manner, the oaths sworn to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the covenant He had made with His chosen people, turns to his own child, saying,—"Thou shalt be called the Prophet of the Highest, for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways." I cannot often enough bring before my mind the great fact of the mission which was necessary then, and is so now, to prepare the way of the Lord. Zacharias must have felt joy and gladness indeed; while uttering this solemn prophecy he saw before him the mighty career of the son of his old age,—"this child in whom was grace;" and with the eye of faith he must have beheld him, not only remitting the sins of the people, by giving them the know-

ledge of their salvation, but he must have looked beyond this short life, and seen him, who was the centre of all his heart's affections, enjoying an eternity of happiness near the Almighty God, Who so marvellously sent him to forward His mighty scheme of salvation.

In meditating upon this history, I must not forget that the messengers, who are now preparing and making a way for Christ's eternal kingdom, and who are now giving knowledge of salvation to His people by the remission of their sins, are the ministers and stewards of His mysteries. Remember this, O my soul, and whenever thou seest one of God's priests, bear ever in mind that they carry a high and holy commission; they hold the golden keys and, especially, they celebrate that sacred mystery and handle those sacred symbols, which, to the faithful, become the Body and Blood of our Lord. Do thou ever bear thyself with humility and reverence before the priest; in him regard not the man; but look to the prayers that he offers for thee, the absolution which he gives thee, and the sacred mysteries which he celebrates for the strengthening and refreshing of thy soul.

A priest clad in sacred garments, is CHRIST's deputy, that, with all supplication and humility, he may beseech GOD for himself and for the whole people. When a priest doth celebrate the holy Eucharist, he honoureth GOD, he rejoiceth angels, he edifieth the Church, he helpeth the saints, and maketh himself partaker of all good things.

Open all the avenues of thy heart to admit the good tidings of salvation, which, day by day, and week by week, are brought before thee. O my soul, welcome them; realize the great fact that they go before the LORD; that He is sure to follow; and that, in a day and hour that thou knowest not of.

O LORD, let Thy heavenly messenger come unto me, unworthy as I am; and grant unto me such a knowledge of salvation, and so remit my many sins and offences, that I may in spirit and truth say, "Blessed be the LORD GOD of Israel, for He hath visited and redeemed me."

O LORD JESU CHRIST, Who at Thy first coming didst send Thy messenger to prepare Thy way before Thee; Grant that the ministers and stewards of Thy mysteries may

likewise so prepare and make ready Thy way, by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, that at Thy second coming to judge the world we may be found an acceptable people in Thy sight, Who livest and reignest with the FATHER and the HOLY SPIRIT, ever One GOD, world without end. *Amen.*

Friday

AFTER THIRD SUNDAY.

AND THE CHILD GREW, AND WAXED STRONG IN SPIRIT, AND WAS IN THE DESERTS TILL THE DAY OF HIS SHEWING UNTO ISRAEL.—St. Luke, i. 80.

LORD, as I come day by day before Thee, I have more and more occasion to bewail the little fruit I gather from the opportunities Thou hast graciously afforded me: grant me so prayerfully to meditate upon this passage of Holy Scripture, that it may be profitable for my advancement in true godliness.

I picture to myself the gracious child John, daily shewing greater promise; his countenance beautiful; the mild rays of spiritual grace beaming from his eye; his limbs, free, and unfettered by restraints, bounding along in the free air of the desert; looking through all the beauties of nature up to GOD; and finding in every object, a fresh subject of praise and thanksgiving

to Him, Who had filled him with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb. He "waxed strong in spirit." On reading this, how does the mind run over the future events of his life, from his preaching to the multitudes in the deserts, to his boldly stepping forward to rebuke the great man of the world for his vicious courses; and how does the heart swell with thankfulness to God for thus suiting the spirit to the trials which it has to bear. How ought this to encourage me, poor weak, timid creature as I am, when, in contemplating the possible trials which may befal me, and looking forward to those which are sure to come, I shrink with dread, and distrust my own strength to bear all. Well mayest thou shrink, O my soul, but, though of thyself thou canst do nothing, thou hast a gracious Saviour, Who will not suffer thee to be tempted above what thou canst bear, if only thou wilt seek for thy strength from Him Who alone is mighty to save. John grew in stature, and waxed strong in spirit, but he remained in the desert until the time of his shewing unto Israel. In the stillness, and solitude, and boundless space of the desert, his soul seemed to have a freer range, and must have been drawn into nearer communion with

God. Those who seek to live entirely according to God's will, feel more true enlivenment and less restraint in solitude; they feel that God is more especially near them when retired, than when stirring amid the throng and din of the world. When the spirit requires bracing and setting to some difficult work, a few quiet hours in the silence and solitude of thy closet, where thou canst have communion with thy God, and rest suspended, as it were, between heaven and earth, will do more towards knitting and strengthening thy spiritual sinews, than months of unremitted bustling activity spent even in acts of the most self-denying labours for the love of God.

Think on this, O my soul; and whenever, in the course of thy career, thou findest thyself beset with business, bewildered by conflicting duties, and perhaps annoyed and irritated by adverse occurrences, turn aside if it be but for a minute; lift up thy heart; pray for strength; and it may be the thick cloud will roll off, and thy way be clear before thee. This is certainly the case in great difficulties; resolve to try it in the more common.

O send out Thy light and Thy truth, that

they may lead me: and bring me unto Thy holy hill, and to Thy dwelling.

And that I may go unto the altar of God, even unto the God of my joy and gladness: and upon the harp will I give thanks unto Thee, O God, my God.

Why art thou so heavy, O my soul: and why art thou so disquieted within me?

O put thy trust in God: for I will yet give Him thanks, Which is the help of my countenance, and my God.

Saturday

AFTER THIRD SUNDAY.

AND HE CAME INTO ALL THE COUNTRY ABOUT JORDAN, PREACHING THE BAPTISM OF REPENTANCE FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS.—St. Luke, iii. 3.

BE with me, O God, while I meditate; that something may be brought thereout which may be of benefit to my soul.

The Word of the Lord came to John in the wilderness, and he entered upon his mission. I picture him to myself, clad in a raiment of camel's hair, with a leathern girdle about his loins; and bearing all the appearance of one whose life was passed in austere self-denial. He had lived hitherto the life of a hermit; now he was going about, full of the Holy Ghost, stirring up the people to repent, with all the powerful eloquence of his strong spirit.

The baptism for the remission of sins, could not have been baptism as we understand that

holy rite, because there was no gift conveyed therein. It must have been a preparation for future remission of sins; and the washing of water may have been the outward sign of repentance.

The end and object, both of John's preaching and of his baptism, was to exalt the vallies, bring down the mountains and hills, to make the crooked straight, and the rough places plain. By the vallies I may understand the lowly, poor, weak-spirited persons who required to be raised up to the standard necessary for obtaining pardon, and to be encouraged to make the exertions necessary to work out their salvation. The mountains and hills might be the proud, the haughty, the arrogant and insolent, who required to be brought down before they could be the followers of the lowly Jesus. The crooked might be those who were dishonest and sly, and who strove to accomplish their purposes by unlawful means. The rough ways might be those who required to be calmed and soothed, and brought into a quiet equable state of mind fit for the gospel of peace.

Consider, my soul, dost thou require to be

raised? to be brought down? to be made smooth? Of a truth thou requirest to be brought down; thou art full of proud thoughts, and thou art ever ready to consider thyself better than thy neighbours. Thou dost also need that quiet and calm spirit, which betokens trust and confidence and peace with God.

O ETERNAL God, merciful and gracious, vouchsafe Thy favour and Thy blessing to Thy servant; let the love of Thy mercies, and the dread and fear of Thy Majesty, make me careful and inquisitive to search Thy will, and diligently to perform it, and to persevere in the practices of a holy life, even to the last of my days.

O let Thy Spirit dwell with me for ever, and make my soul just and charitable, full of honesty, full of religion, resolute and content in holy purposes, but inflexible to evil. Make me humble and obedient, peaceable and pious. Let me never envy any man's good; nor deserve to be despised myself; and if I be, teach me to bear it with meekness and charity.

Give me a tender conscience, a resigned will,

and mortified affections, that I may be as Thou wouldest have me, and my portion may be in the lot of the righteous, in the brightness of Thy countenance, and the glories of eternity. *Amen.*

Fourth Sunday in Advent.

AND THE PEOPLE ASKED HIM SAYING, WHAT SHALL WE DO THEN? HE ANSWERETH AND SAITH UNTO THEM, HE THAT HATH TWO COATS, LET HIM IMPART TO HIM THAT HATH NONE; AND HE THAT HATH MEAT, LET HIM DO LIKEWISE.—St. Luke, iii. 10, 11.

ASSIST me, LORD, with Thy Holy Spirit! Be with me, I beseech Thee, and make this my meditation profitable for my soul!

I picture to myself John the Baptist, standing surrounded by the multitudes, who came to hear his wonderful preaching. They are so stirred by his eloquence, that they begin to ask questions concerning those observances which are necessary for their repentance.

"The people"—those who were not living in any evil way, were to do good works—alms-deeds are recommended to them. How fit a preparation for the gospel of peace!

Let him that hath two coats, give him to him

that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise: feed the hungry, clothe the naked; freely have ye received, freely give. The command implies that the giving is to be to the very extent of the power, and such as must cause self-denial to the giver. "*Two* coats," not *many* coats; and "meat," not a great deal, or a superfluity of meat. Everything was to be divided with those who had none of these things. This was the command of the messenger, and this was the preparation to be made for Him, Who was to preach the gospel to the poor.

To us, who have received that gospel, the command has become a privilege. Our blessed Lord says that every time we relieve one of His poor we "do it unto Him;" and that even a cup of cold water, given in His name, will meet with its reward.

O my soul, think upon this, and, whenever thou seest a poor man, remember thy dearest Saviour, and give; not grudgingly or of necessity, but as to one who, being to thee in the place of thy Lord, is invested with high dignity. Remember also, that thou wilt become more and more attached to those on whom thou conferrest

comforts and blessings, and that as thou art increasing thine alms, thou art raising a heap of love, which will grow up until it reaches thy SAVIOUR; and so will join as it were heaven and earth within thee.

O GOD, Who knowest the necessities of all Thy creatures, give Thy poor the spiritual things they stand in need of.

Support Thy poor members, O JESUS, under all their difficulties, and sanctify their bodily wants to the salvation of their souls. LORD, grant they may bear their poor estate with patience and resignation, and that we may one day meet in the Paradise of GOD.

Blessed is he that considereth the poor and needy; the Lord shall deliver him in the time of trouble.

The LORD preserve him, and keep him alive, that he may be blessed upon earth: and deliver not Thou him unto the will of his enemies.

The LORD comfort him, when he lieth sick upon his bed: make Thou all his bed in his sickness.

I said, LORD, be merciful unto me: heal my soul, for I have sinned against Thee.

And when I am in my health, Thou upholdest me: and shalt set me before Thy face for ever.

Blessed be the LORD GOD of Israel: world without end. *Amen.*

Monday

AFTER FOURTH SUNDAY.

THEN CAME ALSO PUBLICANS TO BE BAPTIZED, AND SAID UNTO HIM, MASTER, WHAT SHALL WE DO? AND HE SAID UNTO THEM, EXACT NO MORE THAN THAT WHICH IS APPOINTED YOU. AND THE SOLDIERS LIKEWISE DEMANDED OF HIM, SAYING, AND WHAT SHALL WE DO? AND HE SAID UNTO THEM, DO VIOLENCE TO NO MAN, NEITHER ACCUSE ANY FALSELY, AND BE CONTENT WITH YOUR WAGES.—St. Luke, iii. 12, 13, 14.

IN the Name of the FATHER, and of the SON, and of the HOLY GHOST, I beseech Thee, LORD, to turn these my feeble efforts to the good of my soul.

The publicans and soldiers were those, who, having, from their peculiar callings, many temptations in their way, were warned to live in strict watch as regarded those dangers.

I may imagine the stirring nature of the Baptist's appeals, for even the money-getting publicans, the fierce and tyrannical soldiers, were moved to question him as to their means of

repentance. The occupation of these two classes tended to harden the hearts, yet even they exclaimed, What shall we do? Exact no more than what is appointed you, is the plain and decided answer. The publicans probably felt disappointed that they were not called upon to do something; they might have found it easier than to leave off exacting more than their due, which, being part of their worldly business, they might imagine would not come under the notice of their heart-searching Teacher. How often wouldest thou, O my soul, set aside performing an irksome duty, or postpone correcting an error, and please thyself with the vain fancy that thou art obeying thy God by doing, what is indeed a religious act, but which God will never accept, if it has excluded the performance of a direct duty.

The soldiers were to "do violence to no man, and to be content with their wages." How could they repent, how could they hope for the kingdom of heaven, while their hands were stained with the blood of the innocent, and their hearts filled with thoughts of rapine and extortion?

I ought to observe, that in neither of these

cases is a word said to condemn the calling of either party; the right exercise of that calling was all that John the Baptist spoke about. This should shew me that it will not be my occupation that will exclude me from the kingdom of heaven, but the manner in which I exercise that occupation. Worldly business is indeed a sore let and hindrance to me in running my race; and I find the greatest difficulty in so regulating my mind as not to make it an effectual bar to my salvation. By God's help, I resolve that it shall not be so; but though I quail before the difficulty of the task, I will never relax in my endeavours to do all as to God. If I at times forget myself, and am carried away by the vanities or business of this life, I will return to my God, and humbly implore His pardon, and seek more earnestly for the grace of recollectedness and devotion. O my soul, set thyself in earnest to the work that is before thee. Strain every nerve; relax not thy efforts; for, until thou canst at all times, and in every thing, see thy God and Saviour with thee, thou canst in no wise hope to enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Tuesday

BEFORE CHRISTMAS.

GOD, WHO AT SUNDRY TIMES AND IN DIVERS MANNERS SPAKE IN TIMES PAST UNTO THE FATHERS BY THE PROPHETS, HATH IN THESE LAST DAYS SPOKEN UNTO US BY HIS SON.—Hebrews, i. 1.

CONSIDER, O my soul, that the eternal Father could not have given us more powerful motives to confide in His love and mercy, than by giving us His well-beloved Son for our Redeemer, because He could not give a more certain proof of desiring our good, and of His immense love for us; having given His Son, He could give nothing greater. May all men, O GOD, praise Thy infinite charity for ever!

GOD having given us His Son, how can we doubt but that with Him He will give us all things? If He has given us His Son, He will not refuse to forgive our offences, if we are sorry for them and detest them. He will not refuse

the graces necessary to resist temptations, when we seek for them from Him; He will not refuse us His holy love, when we desire it; nor will He refuse us the joys of heaven, unless we render ourselves unworthy of them by falling into sin. Hear, O my soul, how Jesus Himself assures us of this; "If you ask the Father anything in My Name, He will give it you." Animated therefore, O God, by this promise, for the love of Thy Son Jesus Christ I beseech Thee to pardon all my offences against Thee; grant me perseverance in virtue till the last hour of my life; give me Thy holy love, that I may detach my heart from all things else, to love only Thee, Who art infinite goodness; grant me the joys of heaven, that I may then love Thee with all my strength and for ever, without the fear of ever ceasing to love Thee.

O LORD Jesus my Saviour, Thou art every good, Thou alone art sufficient for me, Thee only do I desire. If at any time I have driven Thee from me by sin, I desire heartily to repent. Pardon me, and return to me, O my Saviour, and if Thou be now with me, as I hope

Thou art, I beseech Thee never more to depart from me, or I will rather say, may I never lose Thy gracious presence by my return or continuance in sin; leave me not, neither forsake me, O Lord my God! *Amen.*

Wednesday

BEFORE CHRISTMAS.

HATH IN THESE LAST DAYS SPOKEN UNTO US BY HIS SON.—Hebrews, i. 2.

HOW ought I to thank GOD for having allowed me to be born after the accomplishment of the great work of human redemption! How could I have supported the weight of so many sins and infirmities had I lived before the coming of JESUS CHRIST?

Before He came into the world, in what a wretched state were men! In Judæa alone was the knowledge of the true GOD; in all the other parts of the world idolatry reigned, so that men adored images of wood and stone, the work of men's hands; and they bowed themselves before false gods, but the true GOD they knew not. Even now how many kingdoms are there, where there are none of true faith, and all are infidels! How much therefore ought I to thank GOD for having allowed me to be born after the coming

of our Lord, and to be a member of His body! I give Thee thanks, O God, for this great favour. I know, O God, that Thou desirest my salvation, and I have wickedly many times exposed myself to peril by renouncing Thy grace. Have pity, O my Redeemer, on my poor soul, which has cost Thee so much. The slave committed sin, and by so doing gave himself up to the power of the devils; and his Lord Himself came, and rescued him by His own death! Oh! immense love! Oh! infinite love of God for man! If, my Redeemer, Thou hadst not saved me by Thy death, what would have become of me? of me, who by my sins, have deserved death? O my Saviour, I thank Thee for Thy great mercy, and hope to thank Thee for it for ever in heaven. O Thou, Who for my sins and for the sins of the world didst condescend to leave Thy throne in heaven, and to take upon Thee our nature, let me not again defile that nature which Thou hast so consecrated, but let me keep my body, soul, and spirit, as a temple consecrated to Thy service, and never let me be separated from Thee.

Thursday

BEFORE CHRISTMAS.

HATH IN THESE LAST DAYS SPOKEN UNTO US BY HIS SON.—Hebrews, i. 2.

LET me consider the immense love which God has shown me by becoming man, to obtain for me and for all the world eternal salvation.

Our first father, Adam, had sinned, and had rebelled against God; for which he was expelled from Paradise, and, together with his descendants, condemned to eternal death. But the Son of God, looking upon lost man, offered Himself to take human flesh, and free us from death, by dying for us as a malefactor on the cross. His divine omniscience foresaw that He would have to lead a most humble and painful life upon earth; that He would be born in a cold stable, and laid in a manger; that He would have to flee into Egypt, in order to escape the cruelty of wicked men; then, that He would have to reside

under the roof of a poor carpenter to work for His daily bread. He foresaw all His toils, all His weariness, His hunger, and His thirst, and His unrest; and He foresaw that last bitter agony, and His death in torments, nailed to the cruel cross, despised and rejected of men. All this He in His unfathomable love and tender mercy undertook, that I, that all the world, might be saved. O my soul, the divine Son of God became man that He might be loved by men; but where is the love thou hast towards Him? He has given His life to save thee, and why art thou so ungrateful? Why, instead of loving, dost thou so slight and despise Him? Behold thou art one who hast, more than others, been ungrateful to thy Saviour. O blessed Jesus, through that love which caused Thee to die upon the cross for me, pardon all the offences I have committed against Thee!

I love Thee, O Word made flesh; I love Thee, O infinite goodness; and I am exceedingly sorry for all my sins. Give me, O Jesus, Thy love; and grant that I may continue to love Thee until the end of my life.

Christmas Eve.

AND THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH, AND DWELT AMONG US.
St. John, i. 14.

I AM unworthy, O LORD, to enter upon the consideration of the mysteries of Thy Holy Word. I feel entirely unable to use words fit for the high and holy subject on which I desire to meditate. Grant, I humbly beseech Thee, that nothing I meditate upon may be done irreverently, or otherwise than may be turned by the grace of Thy Holy Spirit to my ratification.

It was ordained in the eternal counsels of the Most High, when, after Adam fell, man must have perished everlastingly, had not He in His infinite love and mercy determined upon the salvation of the race, that the Second Person of the blessed and glorious Trinity, GOD the Son, should take upon Him our nature, and by suffering the punishment due to our sins, should free us from

an eternity of misery. To this great fact did all the prophets bear witness. Abraham's sacrifice on Mount Moriah; Jacob's dying blessing; the prophecy of Balaam; and in short every leading event in the history of God's chosen people, contained, either directly or indirectly, by type or prophecy, a foreshadowing of the event which in fulness of time came to pass.

God sent His only begotten Son to take our nature upon Him. Let me consider the nature of my body; the feebleness of its infancy; its liability to pain, to inconvenience, if any of its functions are in the least deranged; its weakness, its corruption; and yet, with this corruptible, painful, miserable flesh, did our God, our Saviour, deign to clothe Himself! Oh! inconceivable humility; unfathomable love! God to leave His throne in the glorious heavens, and to become man like us, only without sin; but still with all our infirmities, all our temptations. O my soul, when thou thinkest upon this, how does every earthly thing lose its value! How contemptible does every pomp and pleasure of the world become! How hateful and exceeding sinful does sin appear! sin, which required such an expiation as this to blot it out!

Humble thyself to the dust, O my soul, and think upon thy Incarnate God — God manifest in the flesh — Immanuel, God with us! And if thou canst in any degree realize the stupendous fact, thou wilt become more and more humble, more and more thankful, more and more loving; and thou wilt endeavour, on the morrow, when thou art commemorating the festival of thy dear Lord's Nativity, to put on strength, to gird thyself with gladness, but withal to rejoice with such a chastened and humbled joy as must be when thou callest to remembrance,

1. That thy sins make this Incarnation of thy Lord necessary.

2. That He was born into a world of sorrow; invested with a body of pain.

3. That He took upon Him the form of a servant; and that from the day of His birth until the time of that last bitter cry, He carried about with him the burthen of thy sins.

Blessed Jesus! be merciful unto me a sinner — yea the chief of sinners! Take away all mine iniquity, and receive me graciously; and let me with joyful heart, and deeply thankful spirit, on this the eve of Thy Nativity hear Thee say: —

AWAKE, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city: for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean.

Shake thyself from the dust; arise, and sit down, O Jerusalem: loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion.

For thus saith the LORD, Ye have sold yourselves for nought; and ye shall be redeemed without money.

For thus saith the LORD GOD, My people went down aforetime into Egypt to sojourn there; and the Assyrian oppressed them without cause.

Now therefore, what have I here, saith the LORD, that My people is taken away for nought? they that rule over them make them to howl, saith the LORD; and My Name continually every day is blasphemed.

Therefore My people shall know My Name: therefore they shall know in that day that I am He that doth speak: behold, it is I.

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publish-

eth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!

Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion.

Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the Lord hath comforted His people, He hath redeemed Jerusalem.

The Lord hath made bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord.

For ye shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight: for the Lord will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your rereward.

Behold, My Servant shall deal prudently, He shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high.

As many were astonied at Thee; His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men:

So shall He sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at Him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider.

The Feast of the Nativity.

CHRISTMAS DAY.

AND SHE BROUGHT FORTH HER FIRST BORN SON, AND WRAPPED HIM IN SWADDLING CLOTHES, AND LAID HIM IN A MANGER.—St. Luke, ii. 7.

O THOU, Who didst take upon Thyself our nature, I here present to Thy holy humanity my whole self, humbly desiring that as Thou didst clothe Thyself with a human body, so Thou wilt deign to clothe me with a robe of righteousness; covering my sins, raising my weakness, and sustaining my mortality; that so I may be finally raised to Thy heavenly home, and clothed in a robe of glory.

Approach, my soul, and regard that lowly stable, hollowed out of a rock, and with a rude door or fence from the weather; lift the latch, and enter. On this side stand horned cattle. From one corner there proceeds a gentle light; turn thee and look. There is a man past the

prime of his life, and a tender and delicate woman. They are watching with tenderest earnestness over a manger, or crib for holding the food of the cattle. Thou mayest look still nearer; there, in that manger, lies in helpless infancy, One—and that One is the LORD! How does the Blessed Virgin watch with adoring love over the first slumbers of Him Who had deigned to choose her as the mother of His humanity! Look with her at the Blessed Child—at Him Who is "Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty GOD, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace!" Thou mayst regard those hands now lifted up in the impotence of infancy; think upon them so often lifted in prayer; upon the blessings, the healings, the raisings from the dead, for which these blest hands were so often stretched out. Think of them bound; think of them pierced through with nails! Look upon those feet, now too small and weak to support the weight of His sacred body; hereafter they are to walk upon seas and to bear Him about on missions of mercy and love, and to be nailed and pierced, and transfixed to the cruel cross. The head and face, so beautiful and smiling in rosy infancy, encircled with a

thorny crown, buffetted, spit upon! The side, now so sound, and smooth, and fair, to be pierced with a sharp and polished spear! Think upon the agonies, the labours, the sufferings, which are coming upon that holy Babe; think that for this end He left His Father's throne; He emptied Himself of all His glory, He entered into the womb, came into the world on a cold winter's night in a poor stable, was wrapt in coarse coverings, and became subject to poor parents. And all this was for *thee*, thou poor soul; thou who shrinkest from the least pain, tremblest at the least danger, art disinclined to forego any luxury, and pamperest thy poor mortal frame; thou, who sinnest without compunction, who errest without a sigh, and who even now art not melted into passionate grief to think that all this condescension, and humility, and endurance, was to save thee from the just penalty thou hast incurred. But, for once, think not of thyself but of Him, Whose life of sorrow and suffering thou oughtest to follow, and if He deigns to make thee partaker in any degree of His sufferings, rejoice and count it the greatest honour to be reckoned worthy of enduring anything for Him.

The Incarnation and Birth of our Saviour remains to us not as a mere fact, in this world's history, but as the present source of new and ever blessed mysteries in His Church. He Who once condescended to be born in a manger, does now continually deign to be born in a cradle even less worthy and less pure — even in the heart of fallen man — yea, He has condescended to be born in me; let me therefore, carry about with me an awful remembrance of these holy mysteries; and earnestly pray that my body, sanctified and exalted by union with the Divinity, may be so reverently accounted of by me, that I may not dare to profane it by wicked affections, low thoughts, covetous desires, and unbeseeming wishes; but that I may become in body, soul, and spirit, wholly united unto the Lord; and may follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth.

WE praise Thee, O God: we acknowledge Thee to be the Lord.

All the earth doth worship Thee: the Father everlasting.

To Thee all angels cry aloud: the heavens, and all the powers therein.

To Thee cherubim and seraphim: continually do cry.

Holy, Holy, Holy: Lord God of Sabaoth.

Heaven and earth are full of the Majesty: of Thy Glory.

The glorious company of the apostles: praise Thee.

The goodly fellowship of the prophets: praise Thee.

The noble army of martyrs: praise Thee.

The Holy Church throughout all the world: doth acknowledge Thee.

The Father: of an infinite Majesty.

Thine honourable, true: and only Son.

Also the Holy Ghost: the Comforter.

Thou art the King of Glory: O Christ.

Thou art the everlasting Son: of the Father.

When Thou tookest upon Thee to deliver man: Thou didst not abhor the Virgin's womb.

When Thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death: Thou didst open the kingdom of heaven to all believers.

Thou sittest at the right hand of God: in the glory of the Father.

We believe that Thou shalt come: to be our Judge.

We therefore pray Thee, help Thy servants: whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy precious Blood.

Make them to be numbered with Thy saints: in glory everlasting.

O Lord save Thy people: and bless Thine heritage.

Govern them: and lift them up for ever.

Day by day: we magnify Thee.

And we worship Thy Name: ever world without end.

Vouchsafe, O Lord: to keep us this day without sin.

O Lord, have mercy upon us: have mercy upon us.

O Lord, let Thy mercy lighten upon us: as our trust is in Thee.

O Lord, in Thee have I trusted: let me never be confounded.

O HOLY, and ever Blessed Jesus, Who, being the eternal Son of God, and most high in the glory of God the Father, didst vouchsafe for us sinners to be born of an humble Virgin, to be subject to the weakness of a little child, to grow up in a life of privacy and labour,

to declare Thyself at last the Redeemer of the world, by establishing a law of grace and confirming it with innumerable miracles, and suffering for it intolerable persecutions, even unto death upon the cross; work in me, I beseech Thee, a due sense of Thy infinite love, that, adoring and believing in Thee as my Lord and Saviour, I may trust in Thy infinite merits, imitate Thy holy example, obey Thy commands; and finally enjoy Thy promises, living and reigning with Thee, Who, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, livest and reignest, God blessed for ever. *Amen.*

Glory be to God on high. *Amen.*

St. Stephen's Day.

AND THEY STONED STEPHEN, CALLING UPON GOD, AND SAYING, LORD JESUS, RECEIVE MY SPIRIT! — Acts, vii. 59.

BEHOLD me, O LORD my GOD! I am thine unworthy servant; but LORD, Thou knowest my heart, Thou seest how weak and feeble I am, and that I greatly desire Thy gracious help: Grant it to me, LORD, for Thy dear Son's sake.

Stephen is standing before the council. The contrast between the hard, shrewd faces of his judges, and his countenance, all radiant and beaming with the Holy Spirit, must have been very striking. He speaks; he gives an account of God's dealings with His chosen people; and he breaks forth into passionate upbraidings of their stiff-neckedness and hardness of heart. The council are cut to the heart; they love the darkness rather than light; they run upon him; but

he, filled with the Holy Ghost, received encouragement and comfort from heaven; he looked up, and saw Jesus sitting at the right hand of God. They take him forth; he kneels; they stone him; and he, praying for his murderers, falls asleep.

What an affecting picture is this: the calm boldness of the young deacon; the frenzied rage of the council; the holy rapture of Stephen; his passive resignation, being cast out, then kneeling down; and the peace, the calm, the love, the charity of his last painful moments—"Lord Jesus, receive my spirit! Lay not this sin to their charge!" falling asleep, yea, asleep! What a subdued calm, and holy joy does that simple word convey!

We again find the Church leading us onward; from contemplating the confirmation of faith in St. Thomas, before the Festival of the Nativity, to witnessing the first fruits and effects of faith in St. Stephen, immediately succeeding the Feast which embodies and brings before us what that faith is—even a realization of all that our Lord and Saviour is to us, and has done for us, and how we must strive to be like Him, and to receive Him as part of ourselves.

How does my heart burn within me as I think upon the martyrdom of the blessed Stephen; how do I long to shew my faith to my dear Lord, in some striking manner. Consider, O my soul, whether thy faith is strong enough for such a test. Thou art not worthy to be honoured with such a high distinction as to be enrolled in the noble army of martyrs; but thou mayest carry about thee a martyr's spirit, and in thy every-day life thou mayest bear the petty trials and small annoyances, the taunts and jests and storms of the world, the ill-tempers of others, and thine own bodily and mental infirmities, so as to shew that thou hast a martyr's will. Then, come weal, come woe, thou wilt ever possess thyself in peace; and, when thy last hour comes, thou wilt kneel, pray for thine enemies, and fall asleep. Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly.

GRANT, O Lord, that, in all our sufferings here upon earth for the testimony of Thy truth, we may steadfastly look up to heaven, and by faith behold the glory that shall be revealed; and, being filled with the Holy Ghost, may learn to love and bless our persecutors by the

example of Thy first martyr Saint Stephen, who prayed for his murderers to Thee, O blessed Jesus, Who standest at the right hand of God to succour all those that suffer for Thee, our only Mediator and Advocate. *Amen.*

St. John's Day.

THE DISCIPLE WHOM JESUS LOVED.—St. John, xxi. 20.

ENLIGHTEN my mind, O LORD my GOD, and grant that, by the assistance of Thy Holy Spirit, I may be enabled rightly to think upon the blessed truths contained in the Holy Scriptures, and that my meditation may be made profitable for my soul.

From the account of this blessed apostle and evangelist, which runs through the gospel, his character must have been one of peculiar sweetness, gentleness, and holiness. He was honoured by our blessed LORD with His friendship, and he seems to have been devoted in his zeal and love for his divine Master. I picture him to myself a young man of gentle aspect, and with his thoughts so entirely centred in his blessed Master as to give him an exalted humility, so to say,—an elevation of bearing, which shone

through and was pre-eminent above his exceeding gentleness, his great humility and his overflowing love.

I have read somewhere that St. John was supposed to be the bridegroom at the marriage in Cana; and I like to entertain the idea, because it gives me to understand that he was connected with our Lord from the beginning of His ministry. Probably there was relationship between the families of the Blessed Virgin and that of St. John.

When the time of our Lord's passion approached — though St. John is not excepted, when the desertion of our Saviour by all His disciples is mentioned — yet we read of him following afar off, and remaining in the hall during that cruel trial, which must have filled his loving heart with agony. He was at the foot of the cross; and our dear Lord there, in His last and bitter agony, gave the surest proof of His love for that disciple, by commending His mother to his charge. During the great forty days, when our Lord was giving His parting commands to His disciples, John is mentioned as the disciple whom Jesus loved; and the words our Lord then spoke seem to signify that

what was said to John was spoken in private, and is not revealed to us.

It was to the disciple whom JESUS loved that those glorious things were shown, which are recorded in the book of the Revelation. To him was shown glory which we cannot comprehend from the description, and which it requires the more refined sense of one who, like St. John, was transported and entirely absorbed into the Deity, to enter into. But I *may* reflect on this, and try to love my LORD more and more; I may think on the loving-kindness of the LORD, of His infinite love to me, of His surpassing glory; and, O my soul, fix thyself intently to acquire this love; follow thy LORD, if only afar off, still follow Him; stand at the foot of the cross; look up to Him; be a martyr in will for the testimony of the LORD JESUS; and then, through His exceeding abundant mercy, thou mayest see His face, and have His name written on thy forehead.

Even so, come, LORD JESUS.

Holy Innocents.

RACHEL WEEPING FOR HER CHILDREN, AND WOULD NOT BE COMFORTED, BECAUSE THEY ARE NOT.—
St. Matthew, ii. 18.

I AM unworthy, O LORD, of the least of Thy mercies. I come before Thee, day after day, beseeching Thy gracious help, and how little I profit thereby Thou knowest. Have patience with me, LORD, and withdraw not Thyself from me during this my meditation.

We are told that an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young Child and His mother and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word, for Herod will seek the Child to destroy Him.

Joseph, with unhesitating obedience, arose, and took the young Child and His mother, and went into Egypt.

The wise men, warned by an angel, departed

into their own country, and disregarded the hypocritical request of Herod to be informed where the Child was, "that he might come and worship Him." Herod was very wrath at having his evil designs frustrated, and he took a fearful means of securing his victim, by commanding the massacre of all the young children of two years old and under. Then was there a great cry throughout the land; mothers lamenting over their little ones, torn from their bosoms, or pouring out their life-blood upon that breast which had but a moment before afforded them their nourishment. Oh! the fearful curses and imprecations which then were heaped upon the head of the wicked Herod! What an amount of misery had he to account for, and above all, what an awful doom awaited him who had sought the life of the Holy Child!

In all these circumstances how marvellously are we permitted to see the hand of God directing the movements of His people! What a blessed privilege it is, and how ought it to encourage us in the assurance that, though unseen, God still sends His angels, to direct, guide, and govern all the events which concern His Church and people.

Our Holy Mother the Church directs us to look from the massacre of the Holy Innocents to their condition in heaven. In the epistle for the day, we see the great and glorious reward which awaited the involuntary confession of their Saviour. I rejoice in the contemplation of the happiness of those glorified little ones, and of all others who are without fault before God. What a consolation for Christian mothers! What a hope laid up in store for those who live a life of purity and innocence and child-like simplicity!

In meditating on this affecting subject, the image comes before me of that one, whose presence on earth was a blessing to me, but whose removal was also a blessing, as it revealed to me some of the deep things of God. What a high honour and privilege to be the mother of one, who, living so near his God and partaking so largely of his glories, is following the Lamb, and singing that song which none can sing but those redeemed from earth. To those who have such a treasure in heaven will this festival be one of true rejoicing; we realize the spiritual presence of the Holy Innocents, and we refuse not to be comforted, "for they are without fault before God."

O ALMIGHTY God, Who out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast ordained strength, and madest infants to glorify Thee by their deaths: Mortify and kill all vices in us, and so strengthen us by Thy grace, that by the innocency of our lives, and constancy of our faith even unto death, we may glorify Thy holy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

His flock, and carry the lambs in His arms, and gently lead those that are with young.

Let me now join with the heavenly host in singing, "Glory to God in the highest;" out of the deep, unto God in the highest — in the heaven of heavens; "for He hath visited and redeemed His people, and hath raised up a mighty salvation for us:" rejoice, be exceeding glad, for the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together. There is also to be peace on earth, but only "to men of peace;" "in Me ye shall have peace, in the world ye shall have tribulations, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." O my soul, thank thy God for His all exceeding goodness: even in the poor shepherds thou hast thy lesson; they were simply following their vocation; and to such the angel of the Lord comes; around such the glory of the Lord shines. Ponder this, and if thy Lord vouchsafe any rewards or bounties to thee, it will ever be while thou art performing diligently thy "common round and daily task." Seek, therefore, grace from the God of grace, to pursue thy duties humbly, earnestly, and diligently, and leave the rest to Him.

LORD, Thou art become gracious unto Thy land: Thou hast turned away the captivity of Jacob.

Thou hast forgiven the offence of Thy people: and covered all their sins.

Thou hast taken away all Thy displeasure: and turned Thyself from Thy wrathful indignation.

Turn us then, O God our Saviour: and let Thine anger cease from us.

Wilt Thou be displeased at us for ever: and wilt Thou stretch out Thy wrath from one generation to another?

Wilt Thou not turn again, and quicken us: that Thy people may rejoice in Thee?

Shew us Thy mercy, O Lord: and grant us Thy salvation.

I will hearken what the Lord God will say concerning me: for He shall speak peace unto His people, and to His saints, that they turn not again.

For His salvation is nigh them that fear Him: that glory may dwell in our land.

Mercy and truth are met together: righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

Truth shall flourish out of the earth: and righteousness hath looked down from heaven.

Yea, the Lord shall show loving-kindness: and our land shall give her increase.

Righteousness shall go before Him: and He shall direct His going in the way.

Tuesday

BEFORE THE FEAST OF THE CIRCUMCISION.

AND THOU SHALT CALL HIS NAME JESUS, FOR HE SHALL SAVE HIS PEOPLE FROM THEIR SINS.—Matt. i. 21.

HAVE mercy on me, a sinner, LORD JESUS! have mercy upon me, and lend Thy gracious aid to this my meditation, that it may awaken in me true compunction, and a sincere desire to amend my life and incline to virtue.

When the mind of Joseph was torn with doubts, and full of suspicion of her who must have been the object of his best affections, an angel came to him in a dream, and announced that the holy thing which was about to be born of the Virgin Mary, was GOD, and that he should call His name JESUS, for He should save His people from their sins. How must the perplexity and sorrow of St. Joseph have been turned in a moment! To be told, not only that his spouse was blameless, but that she was to be the mother of

One who should save His people from their sins, and so fulfil the expectation of Israel, must have caused him to have put off his sackcloth, and must have girded him with gladness. Let me consider this Holy Name — this Name, at which every knee must bow, and every tongue confess that He is LORD, to the glory of GOD the Father.

There is none other name under heaven given to men whereby we must be saved. Let me therefore, whenever that Holy Name is used, have present before me a remembrance of what It is to me, and let that reverential recollection make me bow at the sacred Name, and may the gesture of my body bespeak the entire prostration of my soul when I think on its guilt and its Saviour's merits.

O my soul, picture thyself standing before JESUS, thy Saviour; casting before Him all thy sins, emptying thyself of all thine infirmities, and beseeching Him to be thy Saviour and to have pity on thee; and say to Him, JESUS, have mercy on me, O GOD of compassion, and forgive the many and great offences which I have committed in Thy sight.

Jesus, help me to overcome all temptations to sin, and the malice of my ghostly enemy; help me to resist and repel the motions of the flesh,—sloth, gluttony and indolence; grant me a firm purpose, most merciful Saviour, to amend my life and to grieve for the years past.

Make my heart obedient to Thy will, and ready for Thy love: grant me the gifts of the Holy Ghost, which, by a virtuous life and devout frequenting the Holy Communion, may at length bring me to Thy heavenly kingdom.

Jesus! Jesus! make me constant in faith, hope, and charity, giving me perseverence in all virtues, and a resolution never to offend Thee.

Let me always hold fast the doctrine of Thy Holy Catholic Church, and render me a diligent performer of all holy duties.

Let the memory of Thy passion and of those bitter pains which Thou sufferedst for me, strengthen my patience, recreate me in all tribulation and adversity, and make me cheerfully undergo all suffering and temptations here for Thy love, whilst my soul breatheth after that blessed life, and immortal glory, which Thou hast prepared in heaven for Thy servant.

MY soul hath longed for Thy salvation: and I have a good hope because of Thy word.

Mine eyes long sore for Thy word: saying, O when wilt Thou comfort me?

For I am become like a bottle in the smoke: yet do I not forget Thy statutes.

How many are the days of Thy servant: when wilt Thou be avenged of them that persecute me?

The proud have digged pits for me: which are not after Thy law.

All Thy commandments are true: they persecute me falsely; O be Thou my help.

They had almost made an end of me upon earth: but I forsook not Thy commandments.

O quicken me after Thy loving-kindness: and so shall I keep the testimonies of Thy mouth.

Wednesday

BEFORE THE FEAST OF THE CIRCUMCISION.

AND THEY CAME WITH HASTE AND FOUND MARY, AND JOSEPH, AND THE BABE LYING IN A MANGER. AND THE SHEPHERDS RETURNED, GLORIFYING AND PRAISING GOD FOR ALL THE THINGS THAT THEY HAD HEARD AND SEEN, AS IT WAS TOLD UNTO THEM.—St. Luke, ii. 16, 20.

WHEN the angels went back into heaven, the shepherds determined to go and see the wonders which had been declared to them by the heavenly host; and they went with haste, and found Mary and Joseph and the Babe. I picture them to myself entering the lowly stable, and seeing the reverend form of Joseph, the delicate beauty of the young mother, and the helpless innocence of the Holy Babe. They are poor and rustic men, but on witnessing the fulfilment of the angelic announcement they are so filled with awe, that with rude courtesy and homely obeisance, they kneel beside the rude manger, and offer such homage as their rough training enables them. GOD looks not at the

outward man, but regards solely the hidden man of the heart, and He chose the shepherds to show that He intended to hide His wonders from the wise and prudent and to reveal them to babes. Do thou, O my soul, learn from this Scripture, of how great price is that earnestness and zeal in God's service, which makes thee "go in haste" to seek thy Lord. Thou must also learn, that when thou goest to Bethlehem to seek that holy Child, and findest Him in a manger, thou must be satisfied with finding thy Lord's word simply and literally fulfilled. Thou must not expect signs and wonders, but must adore with the shepherds, and spread abroad the things thou knowest concerning this Child.

The shepherds returned praising and glorifying God. Do thou likewise, O my soul; thou hast seen and dost know much more than those simple men; be not behind them in their zeal or in their thanksgivings, but steadfastly purpose and resolve to go to thy Lord "in haste," and to return glorifying and praising Him.

O GOD, my heart is ready, my heart is ready: I will sing and give praise with the best member that I have.

Awake, thou lute, and harp: I myself will awake right early.

I will give thanks unto Thee, O Lord, among the people: I will sing praises unto Thee among the nations.

For Thy mercy is greater than the heavens: and Thy truth reacheth unto the clouds.

Set up Thyself, O God, above the heavens: and Thy glory above all the earth.

That Thy beloved may be delivered: let Thy right hand save them, and hear Thou me.

God hath spoken in His holiness: I will rejoice therefore, and divide Sichem, and mete out the valley of Succoth.

Gilead is mine, and Manasses is mine: Ephraim also is the strength of my head.

Judah is my law-giver, Moab is my washpot: over Edom will I cast out my shoe; upon Philistia will I triumph.

Who will lead me into the strong city: and who will bring me into Edom?

Hast not thou forsaken us, O God: and wilt not Thou, O God, go forth with our hosts?

O help us against the enemy: for vain is the help of man.

Through God we shall do great acts: and it is He that shall tread down our enemies.

The Feast of the Circumcision.

AND WHEN EIGHT DAYS WERE ACCOMPLISHED FOR THE CIRCUMCISING OF THE CHILD, HIS NAME WAS CALLED JESUS.—St. Luke ii. 21.

I COME into the presence of GOD, and I humbly implore His gracious assistance in this my meditation.

How infinitely merciful, loving and humble is our Blessed LORD! He took our nature upon Him, He became perfect man, but He nevertheless went through all the penalties which the sinfulness of our flesh demands of us; in that He took our nature upon Him, He submitted to circumcision, in order to put that nature into a saveable condition. He began His work of redemption by obeying the law of circumcision; He completed it by pouring out His blood upon the cross.

His Name was called JESUS—a Name above every name; GOD in old times was known by

names of power, of nature, of majesty; but His name of mercy was reserved till now, when God purposed to pour out the whole treasure of His mercy by the ministry and mediation of His Son. This is the Name which we should engrave in our hearts, and write upon our foreheads, and pronounce in our most harmonious accents, and rest our faith upon, and place our hopes in, and love with the overflowings of charity, joy, and adoration.

Consider, O my soul, this perfect obedience of Thy Saviour, and bring into contrast with it thy manifold shortcomings, the excuses thou canst make when the performance of any of the rites of religion would be inconvenient, or irksome, or as thou thinkest, painful, and attended with harm. The question is not whether such pleas may not be lawful, but whether thou takest as much pains in attending to thy religious duties, and in finding reasons for so doing, as thou dost for leaving them undone? Endeavour to attain to the perfection of obedience to the law of thy Lord and Saviour; in it thou wilt find rest, thou wilt then have no will but His will, thy wishes will always be subservient to His commands, thou wilt watch for the slightest

indications of His will, and thou wilt endeavour to be one with Him, as He is One with His Father. *Amen.*

ALMIGHTY God, Who madest Thy blessed Son to be circumcised, and obedient to the law for man; grant us the true Circumcision of the Spirit; that, our hearts, and all our members, being mortified from all worldly and carnal lusts, we may in all things obey Thy blessed will; through the same Thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

The Circumcision.

SECOND DAY.

IN WHOM ALSO YE ARE CIRCUMCISED WITH THE CIRCUMCISION MADE WITHOUT HANDS, IN PUTTING OFF THE BODY OF THE SINS OF THE FLESH BY THE CIRCUMCISION OF CHRIST.—Col. ii. 11.

ASSIST me, O LORD, I humbly entreat Thee, in this most solemn duty at this most solemn season; of myself I am nothing, and can do nothing, but send me Thy Holy Spirit to direct and guide this and all my doings in the way of Thy truth, for the sake of JESUS CHRIST.

While the Church guides and directs us to seek the true circumcision of the spirit, it is my duty to meditate upon how I have performed my part, and how I intend to improve in my progress for the time to come.

I stand, as it were, between the two years: the old year, with all its events, and cares, and joys, is vanishing into the distance of eternity, and the

new year is coming on. I have entered upon it with confidence and overboldness, never considering that it may be fraught with events of woe to me and those I love best, and it may be, that its progress may see me laid in my grave. *(Here pause and remember the particular circumstances.)* But my business is with the past. I look back on the old year; I remember in how many things during its course I have been peculiarly blest; *(pause;)* many family circumstances ought to be to me subjects of peculiar thankfulness; and privileges and opportunities for the improvement and advancement of my soul, have been granted to me above what is the ordinary lot of persons in these days. But also I must not shrink from what makes the retrospect a sad but still a most solemn duty; I see opportunities lost which passed by me and are now sunk into unfathomable eternity; I see neglects of duty,* faults of temper,* pride of spirit,* wanderings in prayer;* these and many, many other things,* shew that I have not yet attained that true circumcision of spirit which is the only way by which I can reach true obedience. [**After naming these things, pause and devoutly remember the particular instances.*]

O my soul, thou art verily guilty in these matters, but thou must resolve and fix in what manner thou canst improve thy condition, so as to make the new year a period of greater advancement, and that thou mayest be ready to meet thy LORD whenever He shall see fit to call thee to Himself. The point thou hast to aim at, is the true circumcision of the spirit; on the way to attain this thou must meditate at a future opportunity, but in the meantime thou must humble thyself, and take revenge upon thy senses for all the evil of the past year.

THOU, Who didst deign that Thy glorious head should be wounded; forgive thereby whatever by the senses of the head I have sinned.

That Thy holy hands should be pierced; forgive thereby whatever I have done amiss by unlawful touch or illicit operation.

That Thy precious side should be opened; forgive thereby whatever I have offended by lawless thoughts in the ardour of passion.

That Thy blessed feet should be riven; forgive thereby whatever I have done by feet swift to evil.

That Thy whole body should be distended; forgive thereby whatever iniquity I have committed by the intervention of all my members. And I too, O Lord, am wounded in soul: behold the multitude, the length, the breadth, the depth of my wounds, and by Thine, heal mine!

The Circumcision.

THIRD DAY.

EVEN SO NOW YIELD YOUR MEMBERS SERVANTS TO RIGHTEOUSNESS UNTO HOLINESS.—Rom. vi. 19.

I COME into the presence of the Holy LORD GOD; I bow myself before Him, and entreat His gracious aid.

Baptism is to us, under the gospel, what circumcision was to those under the law, a cleansing from, and putting away of, the filth of the flesh and of the spirit. I desire now to turn my thoughts to the different ways in which it is necessary to circumcise the spirit, heart, and members, so as to yield them servants to righteousness, unto holiness.

The head.—I must endeavour to put away all such fancies and imaginations as obscure and dim the vision of GOD; I must cut away and prune my thoughts, and bring all into subjection unto the law of CHRIST; I must keep my mind

clear, and guard against wanderings from any subject on which the duty of the moment engages me; but especially, I must guard against wanderings in prayer, and for this I must use the greatest exertion, in order to concentrate all my faculties upon the prayer, or praise, or meditation in which I am engaged. *(Here pause and consider this part of the subject.)* O Lord, I beseech Thee to give me circumcision of the mind, head, and thoughts, and bring all into obedience to Thy laws.

The eyes.—I must guard my looks, and not allow undue mirth or levity to take possession of me. Nevertheless, I am not required "to be of a sad countenance" always, (though the recollection of my sins may well make me so;) but I must try to attain such a calm recollectedness of look that I may never be unprepared to see the Lord, should He come suddenly. *(Pause.)* O Lord, circumcise my looks, my bodily eyes, that they may be fit to behold the glory which shall hereafter be revealed.

The lips and tongue.—I must guard against all rash, idle, unreal words: false witness, lying, and slandering, I hope I need not feel guilty of in the broader sense of their meaning; but all

the approaches to them, how ill-guarded are the paths which lead to these sins in my mind! I must stop ill-words, unreal words; I must guard against too many words, and cultivate the grace of silence. To realize the evils of the tongue, I here repeat what St. James says of it:—

"Even so, the tongue is a little member and boasteth great things: behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!

"And the tongue *is* a fire, a world of iniquity; so is the tongue among our members that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature, and it is set on fire of hell.

"For every kind of beasts and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind. But the tongue can no man tame, it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poisons. Therewith bless we God, even the Father, and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God."

What an awful description of uncircumcised lips! My God, give me the true circumcision of the lips, that I may use only the language of blessing, and remember that for every idle word I shall have to give an account. *(Pause.)*

The heart and affections.—I must not allow

the cares of the world, love of the praise of men, the pride of life, or any love for earthly objects, to stand in the way of, or take the place of God in my heart. Every earthly affection, even the purest, that of a parent to children, is to be brought into subjection to the love of God. But, am I then to endeavour to stifle all the love which I bear to those who are now so dear to me? No; but I am to purify my affections, rend away all that is earthly in them, and look through them, up to God. I am so to refine my worldly affections as that they may be no hindrance, but rather that each object on which they are fixed may be the means of raising them up to God. I am, therefore, to increase rather than diminish my love to my neighbour, and nourish and cultivate in me that divine and heavenly love which will make me, if God demands it, "give up house and brethren and sisters, and father and mother, and wife and children, and lands," for His sake and the gospel's.

LORD, who shall dwell in Thy tabernacle: or who shall rest upon Thy holy hill?

Even he that leadeth an uncorrupt life: and

doeth the thing which is right, and speaketh the truth from his heart.

He that hath used no deceit in his tongue, nor done evil to his neighbour: and hath not slandered his neighbour.

He that setteth not by himself, but is lowly in his own eyes: and maketh much of them that fear the Lord.

He that sweareth unto his neighbour, and disappointeth him not: though it were to his own hindrance.

He that hath not given his money upon usury: nor taken reward against the innocent.

Whoso doeth these things shall never fall.

ALMIGHTY God, Who madest Thy blessed Son to be circumcised, and obedient to the law for man, grant us the true Circumcision of the Spirit; that, our hearts, and all our members, being mortified from all worldly and carnal lusts, we may in all things obey Thy blessed will; through the same Thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

The Circumcision.

FOURTH DAY.

AND I WILL BRING THE BLIND BY A WAY THAT THEY KNEW NOT; I WILL LEAD THEM IN PATHS THAT THEY HAVE NOT KNOWN: I WILL MAKE DARKNESS LIGHT BEFORE THEM, AND CROOKED THINGS STRAIGHT.—Isa. xlii. 16.

BEFORE GOD sent the promised Messiah, even JESUS, to save His people from their sins, all the world sat in darkness; darkness covered the earth, gross darkness the people; they groped hither and thither, and sought for some one to lead them by the hand. Suddenly the light came, and the glory of the LORD rose upon them. Even the Gentiles came to the light, and kings to the brightness of that rising. All the people were dazzled, and, so to say, blinded by that Sun of Righteousness. It was necessary that they should be blind to all earthly things, in order that they might give themselves up to be led by Him, Who would "guide them in paths that they knew not before, and Who would make darkness light, and crooked things

straight." I must in like manner become blind, in order to see; I must renounce all light but that which emanates from the Source of true light, and by it be guided through the obscurities of faith, and acquiesce in my ignorance and darkness to attain to the true light. Go forward, O my soul, led by the Good Shepherd; He will lead thee forth beside the waters of comfort; and He shall be to thee "instead of eyes." The Lord is thy light and thy salvation; whom hast thou to fear? For He is eyes to the blind, and He will lead thee in paths that thou hast not known, and will make darkness light, and the crooked straight. Go forward then, my soul, suffer thyself to be blindly led; be not perplexed at sometimes losing thy star, like the magi. Thou hast seen it once, that ought to suffice thee; go on boldly, across precipices, by the obscure lights of faith. Thy divine Lord and Master, Which is Light itself, will hold thee by the hand as long as thou lookest to Him. Follow His adorable movements in the midst of thy darkness; see only with His eyes, see only as much as He will have thee see; such darkness and such blindness are better than thine own light.

The Circumcision.

FIFTH DAY.

BUT MARY KEPT ALL THESE THINGS, AND PONDERED THEM IN HER HEART. — St. Luke, ii. 19.

THE Blessed Virgin, from being chosen as the Mother of GOD, must have been as perfect as human nature can be perfect. We are therefore much concerned in gathering all the instruction we can from her character; and although the Scripture is remarkably and pointedly reserved on the subject, yet here and there we are permitted to discover traits which leave us in no doubt as to the real character of her who was highly favoured among women.

Mary kept all the things which occurred at the time of the miraculous birth of the Holy Babe, and pondered them in her heart. She talked not with those who came, as the shepherds, to adore and to look; she invited not her neighbours and acquaintance to behold her joy; but she kept all, and ever remained quietly and

silently contemplating the Holy Child JESUS—adoring in Him the Godhead, and ministering to the wants of His human nature.

This silent watchfulness and thought must have laid up in her a store of divine strength and wisdom, without which she could not have endured the agony of the sword which pierced her own soul, when He, Whom she had watched and loved with all the concentrated energy of her pure and holy character, endured the cross, and suffered the shame.

Ponder this, O my soul, and prune thy thoughts and words so as to cultivate that calm recollectedness of spirit which in the handmaid of the LORD are so apparent. Talk not on high matters, but ponder them; be silent, quiet, calm, recollected; let thy adorning be the hidden man of the heart, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of GOD of great price.

In silence and stillness a religious soul advantageth herself, and learneth the mysteries of Holy Scripture. There she may watch with Mary at the cradle of Bethlehem, and be so much more familiar with her GOD by how much farther off she liveth from all worldly disquiet.

The outward man may decay and perish; but if the inward man is renewed day by day, and becomes all-glorious within, it may hope to be brought unto the King in raiment of needlework wrought about with divers colours. With joy and gladness shall it be brought, and shall enter into the King's palace.

THE LORD is my light, and my salvation; whom then shall I fear: the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom then shall I be afraid?

When the wicked, even mine enemies, and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh: they stumbled and fell.

Though an host of men were laid against me, yet shall not my heart be afraid: and though there rose up war against me, yet will I put my trust in Him.

One thing have I desired of the LORD, which I will require: even that I may dwell in th house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the fair beauty of the LORD, and to visit His temple.

For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in

His tabernacle: yea, in the secret place of His dwelling shall He hide me, and set me upon a rock of stone.

And now shall He lift up mine head: above mine enemies round about me.

Therefore will I offer in His dwelling an oblation with great gladness: I will sing, and speak praises unto the Lord.

Hearken unto my voice, O Lord, when I cry unto Thee: have mercy upon me, and hear me.

My heart hath talked of Thee, seek ye My face: Thy face, Lord, will I seek.

O hide not Thou Thy face from me: nor cast Thy servant away in displeasure.

Thou hast been my succour: leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.

When my father and my mother forsake me: the Lord taketh me up.

Teach me Thy way, O Lord: and lead me in the right way, because of mine enemies.

Deliver me not over into the will of mine adversaries: for there are false witnesses risen up against me, and such as speak wrong.

I should utterly have fainted: but that I believe verily to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.

O tarry Thou the LORD's leisure: be strong, and He shall comfort thine heart: and put thou thy trust in the LORD.

The Epiphany.

WHEN JESUS WAS BORN IN BETHLEHEM OF JUDÆA IN THE DAYS OF HEROD THE KING, BEHOLD, THERE CAME WISE MEN FROM THE EAST TO JERUSALEM, SAYING, WHERE IS HE THAT IS BORN KING OF THE JEWS? FOR WE HAVE SEEN HIS STAR IN THE EAST, AND ARE COME TO WORSHIP HIM.—St. Matt. ii. 1, 2.

JESUS was born at Bethlehem; angels announced the birth to shepherds, who represent the Jewish people. To the Gentiles, to whom also was born a Saviour, the intelligence was conveyed by a star; and wise men—those who had studied the courses of the heavens, were rewarded by being the chosen of GOD to announce His gracious purposes. The star was in the east: from whence but from the east could the Sun of Righteousness appear? The Scriptures give us no account of these wise men; they are involved in mystery; they come and they go; they leave their offerings, but we see them no more. So it is with all things that are of the Spirit.

God from the beginning committed the keeping of His mysteries to His own people; to the Jews were committed the oracles of God; among the Jews therefore was the Saviour to be born. But when the star shone in the east, the Gentiles were to come to its light, and kings to the brightness of that rising.

By the aid of the light of that Heavenly Star I desire to meditate upon the vast prospect of the Church, when "the abundance of the sea shall be converted to her, and the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto her."

From the beginning of time God had set up His Church on earth. Adam was its first fruits; he fell, and entailed a curse instead of a blessing upon the race. That curse was in due time to be wiped away; the seed of the woman was to bruise the serpent's head. Still, though the curse worked, yet did God's mercy also work; He preserved Noah in the ark — the type of that Church in which alone we can hope to be saved from the floods of ungodliness. He brought out His chosen seed from the land of Egypt (type of the Church separated from the world); He instructed it by that which is written in the law; by the rite of sacrifices; by the oracles of the

prophets; by the melody of the Psalms; by the wisdom of the Proverbs; by the experience of the histories; and when the fulness of time came, He sent forth His Son. The star shone in the east; the everlasting doors were thrown open; the King of glory came; the desert and the solitary place blossomed; and an highway was there, — it is called the way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it, and the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.

All this came to pass when the wise men saw the bright star in the east. Gentiles and Jews, bond and free, were included in the new covenant, which was sealed in due time by the blood of our God. To the holy society of the Church of God upon earth, all who come to Him by faith, and by washing of water in the lava of regeneration, are enrolled and enlisted. To this holy society I belong; and for the Church redeemed by the precious blood of our dear Saviour I feel the most fervent love and zeal. Grant, O God, that my zeal may be according to knowledge; I desire to use towards her all the expressions of attachment which the Jews used to Jerusalem — "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning! Oh! pray

for the peace of Jerusalem! they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and plenteousness within thy palaces!" But, though this blessed society is spread over the face of the world, we are told that it will be but a remnant that will be saved: the gospel will be preached in all the world, and then will the end come. We may see the march of events; the Church, a solemn procession, now assaulted by foes, now lulled into security by false friends, and the devices of the enemy; now roused by the warning of its ministers; now led aside by false prophets and teachers;—now comes a falling away; how are the ranks thinned! A thousand fall beside thee, and ten thousand at thy right hand. The heavenly Jerusalem is in sight. Hear the voice of the archangel! the trump of God!

"Say ye to the daughter of Zion, behold thy salvation cometh; behold His reward is with Him, and His work before Him!

"And they shall call them the holy people, the redeemed of the Lord; and thou shalt be called, sought out, a city not forsaken."

Breathe the most fervent supplications, O my soul, that thou mayest be found among the remnant which shall be saved from the awful apos-

tacy which must come upon our Zion; and that having washed thy robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, thou mayest serve Him day and night in His temple.

O GOD, Who by the leading of a star didst manifest Thy only begotten Son to the Gentiles; mercifully grant that we, which know Thee now by faith, may after this life have the fruition of Thy glorious Godhead; through JESUS CHRIST our LORD. *Amen.*

The Epiphany.

SECOND DAY.

WHEN THEY HAD HEARD THE KING, THEY DEPARTED; AND LO, THE STAR WHICH THEY SAW IN THE EAST WENT BEFORE THEM, TILL IT CAME AND STOOD OVER WHERE THE YOUNG CHILD WAS. WHEN THEY SAW THE STAR, THEY REJOICED WITH EXCEEDING GREAT JOY.—Matt. ii. 9, 10.

THE magi saw the star in the East; they came to Jerusalem, and obtained the information they desired respecting it. The chief priests and scribes knew the prophecies concerning JESUS, but they partook not of the zeal of the wise men. Knowledge avails nothing to the soul, if the Spirit of GOD has not been sought, or if the heart has been hardened by wilful blindness.

When the magi again set forth on their holy errand, it would seem as if the star suddenly reappeared to them; it went and stood over where the young Child was. When they saw the star shedding the dazzling rays of its brightness on the lowly shed which contained Him

Who was born King of the Jews, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. "When the Lord turned their captivity, then were they like unto them that dream. Then was their mouth filled with laughter and their tongue with joy. Then said they among the heathen, — The Lord hath done great things for them. Yea, the Lord had done great things for them already, whereof they rejoiced.

I must here remark the unhesitating faith of the magi. They sought a king. They were directed to a small hut. They showed no surprise, made no remark upon the extraordinary circumstance; but they rejoiced as simply, and with as great joy, as if they had found Him Whom they sought, clad in purple and living in a palace. My soul, thou mayst profitably meditate on these things, and bring forth that which will be for thy edification. Learned men and wise books may be consulted as to when thou mayest look for thy Saviour, but they will not guide thee unto Him; it is the light of the Holy Spirit which alone will shew thee where the Holy Child is. After making thy inquiries, thou mayst see the Star, and then thou wilt rejoice with an exceeding great joy; for a time thy path

will be enlightened, and thou wilt go on thy way rejoicing. The Star may then withdraw its light; it may be good for thee that the sensible comforts and helps of religion be withdrawn from thee for a season; and thou wilt have to go on, in dryness of spirit, without a ray of the kindly light of that blessed Star. O Lord, if only my will remain right and firm towards Thee, do with me whatsoever it shall please Thee, for it cannot be anything but good whatsoever Thou shalt do with me.

"If it be Thy will I should be in darkness, be Thou blessed; and if be it Thy will I should be in light, be Thou again blessed. If Thou vouchsafe to comfort me, be Thou blessed; and if Thou wilt have me afflicted, be Thou ever equally blessed."

Lo! the Star again shines before thee, poor soul! now mayest thou again rejoice in the divine favour; but rejoice with that simple, child-like, un-anxious joy, which asks no questions, makes no doubts, but enters silently, and worships its Lord, its Saviour, and its God.

The Epiphany.

THIRD DAY.

AND WHEN THEY WERE COME INTO THE HOUSE, THEY SAW THE YOUNG CHILD WITH MARY HIS MOTHER, AND FELL DOWN, AND WORSHIPPED HIM: AND WHEN THEY HAD OPENED THEIR TREASURES, THEY PRESENTED UNTO HIM GIFTS.—St. Matthew, ii. 11.

I HERE bring before me the humble dwelling of the Holy Family; the Babe in the arms of His mother, as I gather from the sacred history, which says that the young Child was *with* Mary His mother. The wise men enter the house, they see the young Child; and their faith, looking through the rough garments in which He was dressed, and the humble circumstances in which He was found, discern in Him the King they sought; in all the awe, and with all the impetuosity of newly awakened faith, they fall down and worship Him. They utter no sound, they speak not; but their silence is more eloquent than words; and words could not express what the Spirit worked within them, while with heads

bent down to the ground they worshipped Him Who was King of kings, Lord of lords. They opened their treasures and presented unto Him gifts; they came not before their Lord empty, but they gave Him what was, in their eyes, of the greatest value.

Ponder these things, O my soul, and see in them thy Lord, brought before thee by the holy Church; look upon the poverty and the weakness of the Holy Babe; but look through that disguise of mortality, and see thy God, the King of the whole earth, the Wonderful, Counseller, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Fall down and worship before the Lord thy Maker, and be ashamed that thou canst not more perfectly and entirely realize the grandeur of the subject. Open thy treasures and present thy gifts unto the Lord; give Him thy whole heart and thy best affections; pour out before Him all the prayers, the tears, the groanings, the plaints, which have been uttered by thy wounded spirit and thy contrite heart; and although thou canst give Him nothing but what is already His, make it acceptable by the compunction, the sorrow, the penitence, with which thou regardest the greatness of thy sin, and the great-

ness of the sacrifice which thy sins have required of Him. For it was thy sin, O my soul, which caused thy God to come down into this cold, miserable, and wicked world; it was thy sin which clothed Him in swaddling bands, and laid Him in the manger, and made Him subject to poor parents; and for all this thou hast to offer Him but the poor gift of thyself.

Behold me, Lord, my spirit, soul and body, mind and thoughts, senses and limbs, life and death; take me for Thine own, my King and my God; purify me and grant me to become less unworthy to offer unto Thee day by day the calves of my lips.

GIVE the King Thy judgments, O God: and Thy righteousness unto the King's Son.

Then shall He judge Thy people according unto right: and defend the poor.

The mountains also shall bring peace: and the little hills righteousness unto the people.

He shall keep the simple folk by their right: defend the children of the poor, and punish the wrong doer.

They shall fear Thee, as long as the sun and

The Epiphany.

FOURTH DAY.

"GOLD."—Matt. ii. 11.

THE prophecy concerning not only the coming of the kings, or wise men of the East, but also of the precise nature of their gifts, was fulfilled. "They shall bring gold and incense, and they shall shew forth the praises of the LORD." The gold was symbolic of a king; its costliness, its magnificence, its purity, made it a fit offering for a king. Throughout the Old Testament gold is mentioned as being in use, especially about such vessels and utensils as were more immediately consecrated to the use of GOD, Who was King of Israel. Our Blessed LORD, when He came in the flesh, and divested Himself of all externals of royalty, was nevertheless acknowledged as King; for He is indeed King of all the earth; all kings bow before Him, all nations do Him service; His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion from

generation to generation. Alleluia! for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth, King of kings and Lord of lords.

In the description of the New Jerusalem (which is not to be read without a feeling of deep reverential longing to be allowed to see such glories) we are told of a street of pure gold; so, hallowing to the end of man's finite vision the gift of the wise men.

But besides the external and evident meaning of the gift of gold, there is a spiritual and hidden one, which it is good for me to meditate upon. Giving gold represents love to God and our neighbours, contempt of riches, poverty of spirit, and all the spiritual riches of that life which seeks unity with God.

Bring thy gold, O my soul, to thy Lord; if indeed thou canst hope that thou mayest live the unitive life, which, being the highest state of spiritual existence in this world, thou must strive earnestly and endeavour to attain.

Love to God, to thy neighbour, contempt of riches, poverty of spirit! How much hast thou to do, before thou canst hope for any of these, in the lowest degree of perfection! Love to God indeed seems easy — but dost thou find it

so? Where are the proofs thereof? Sadly and sorrowfully confess, that God's love to thee is manifest in every thing; thine to Him, darest thou say it, in nothing! So it is with all virtues, especially those which unite thee closely with God. But He is thy hope and strength; a very present help in trouble; He will not leave thee, nor forsake thee; only call upon Him, and He will send His holy life-giving Spirit to make that possible to thee which otherwise would be impossible; only open thy treasures to Him, and present Him with such gifts as thy poverty will admit of; happy wilt thou be, if in the end thou shalt find it to be gold.

MY heart is inditing of a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made unto the King.

My tongue is the pen: of a ready writer.

Thou art fairer than the children of men: full of grace are Thy lips, because God hath blessed Thee for ever.

Gird thee with Thy sword upon Thy thigh, O Thou most mighty: according to Thy worship and renown.

Good luck have Thou with Thine honour: ride on, because of the word of truth, of meekness, and righteousness; and Thy right hand shall teach Thee terrible things.

Thy arrows are very sharp, and the people shall be subdued unto Thee: even in the midst among the King's enemies.

Thy seat, O God, endureth for ever: the sceptre of Thy kingdom is a right sceptre.

Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity: wherefore God, even Thy God, hath anointed thee with The oil of gladness above Thy fellows.

All Thy garments smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia: out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made Thee glad.

Kings' daughters were among Thy honourable women: upon Thy right hand did stand the queen in a vesture of gold, wrought about with divers colours.

Hearken, O daughter, and consider, incline thine ear: forget also thine own people, and thy father's house.

So shall the King have pleasure in thy beauty: for He is thy Lord God, and worship thou Him.

And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with

a gift: like as the rich also among the people shall make their supplication before thee.

The king's daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold.

She shall be brought unto the King in raiment of needlework: the virgins that be her fellows shall bear her company, and shall be brought unto thee.

With joy and gladness shall they be brought: and shall enter into the King's palace.

Instead of thy fathers thou shalt have children: whom thou mayest make princes in all lands.

I will remember thy name from one generation to another: therefore shall the people give thanks unto thee world without end.

The Epiphany.

FIFTH DAY.

FRANKINCENSE, AND MYRRH.—St. Matt. ii. 11.

IN offering the frankincense and myrrh, Holy Scripture does not reveal whether the wise men were aware of the symbolical nature of their treasures; probably they merely offered such sweet spices as were most costly and of greatest rarity. We are all instruments in GOD's hands, and from the example of the magi we must take courage, and offer to GOD whatever is most precious in our eyes, and he will turn it to such account as seems good to Him; instance our prayers. How can I hope that my prayers, imperfect and faltering as they are, can ever find favour in His sight? Yet, if the LORD open my lips,—and He does not despise a broken and contrite heart—I may take courage and read to my comfort what is said in the book of Revelations; because, if the prayers of saints rise with incense offered by an angel, perhaps my

supplications may wing their way, and a faint breathing of them may reach the throne of grace, when the loud, clear, and harmonious voices of the saints cease to be heard.

"And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer, and there was given to him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.

"And the smoke of the incense which came with the prayers of the saints ascended up before God out of the angel's hand."

To the holy Child Jesus, therefore, as God, did the wise men offer incense. He, as our great High Priest, offers Himself as a full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice before the Father. Mystery within mystery! Oh! the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! The myrrh offered to His human nature, brings before us all the bitter things written against our Lord, and which He suffered in our stead. Of this, the bitter herbs, always eaten at the paschal supper, were a constant and evident type; and in them, as also in the offering of myrrh by the

wise men, I may always see His bitter agony in the garden, His sufferings in the judgment hall, His bending under the weight of the cross, His arrival at Calvary, where He had the very myrrh offered to Him, His bitter cross and passion, and His last bitter cry. The spiritual representations of the frankincense and myrrh, are, for the first, prayer, hope, obedience, and all the ways of the illuminative life; faith, mortification, chastity, compunction, and all the ways of the purgative life, are shown forth in the myrrh.

Consider these things, my soul. In the myrrh, offer unto Jesus thy unhesitating faith, putting away all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, purging thy conscience, and so preparing thyself to offer thy incense by obedience, by prayer, in full hope of the Lord's mercy; until thou art fit to live with Him and in Him, offering Him gold, loving Him, and, through Him, thy neighbour, and suffering the loss of all things that thou mayest win Christ.

SAVE me, O God, for Thy name's sake: and avenge me in Thy strength.

Hear my prayer, O God: and hearken unto the words of my mouth.

For strangers are risen up against me: and tyrants, which have not God before their eyes, seek after my soul.

Behold, God is my helper: the Lord is with them that uphold my soul.

He shall reward evil unto mine enemies: destroy Thou them in Thy truth.

An offering of a free heart will I give Thee: and praise Thy name, O Lord: because it is so comfortable.

For He hath delivered me out of all my trouble; and mine eye hath seen His desire upon mine enemies.

First Sunday after the Epiphany.

AND WHEN HE WAS TWELVE YEARS OLD, THEY WENT UP TO JERUSALEM AFTER THE CUSTOM OF THE FEAST. AND WHEN THEY HAD FULFILLED THE DAYS, AS THEY RETURNED, THE CHILD JESUS TARRIED BEHIND IN JERUSALEM; AND JOSEPH AND HIS MOTHER KNEW NOT OF IT. BUT THEY SUPPOSING HIM TO HAVE BEEN IN THE COMPANY, WENT A DAY'S JOURNEY; AND THEY SOUGHT HIM AMONG THEIR KINSFOLK AND ACQUAINTANCE.—St. Luke, ii. 42, 43, 44.

THE parents of JESUS fulfilled the law with great exactness, and our blessed LORD, being obedient in all things to the law, went up at the stated periods to Jerusalem, as that law directs. It was a time of great festivity, and one at which friends and relations met and rejoiced together. Seven days were the appointed time, and then the company of which Joseph and Mary formed a part, went on their road home. I am unwilling to suppose that there was neglect in either Joseph or the blessed Virgin, and that they forgot their precious charge,

amid the hurry and cares attendant on their departure. God ruled the event for His own purposes; great things arise from the most trivial fault or accident. They went a day's journey, then they missed Him, Who, it would have been thought, could not have been out of their sight without their feeling desolate and alone. They sought Him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance, but though they could rejoice with them in their happiness, they could afford no relief to their anxiety.

I picture to myself the painful start which the blessed Virgin must have felt when first she knew that He, so divine and so precious, was not to be found; the agony of self reproach for having allowed Him, whom she knew to be Jesus the Saviour, to depart from her; the eagerness with which she and Joseph went about searching for Him among their friends, and the despair as each said "I know not." The determination to retrace their steps, was all that could be done; they returned to Jerusalem.

I can go no further in this history without stopping to think of its exceeding applicability to me, under circumstances which not unfrequently occur.

For certain solemn festivals I desire to prepare myself; I do as much as in me lies to make my body a temple of the Holy Ghost; I kindle a fire of devotion within me, and do my utmost to carry Jesus with me to the feast. Perhaps I then allow my mind to be divided and carried away by external circumstances; I think more of the rejoicings of friends and neighbours than of the Lord; and when I am about to return to ordinary pursuits, I find I have forgotten the holy Child; — Jesus is not with me! I have not carried Him into all my thoughts, words and actions; for a season He is gone; then it is of no avail to seek among kinsfolk and acquaintance; they find Him not: I must go back; and, if I find Him, it will not be the same as if I never had lost Him.

Thou knowest, O my soul, how great watchfulness it requires not to lose Jesus. Thou must in earnest renounce all extreme carefulness after many things, and endeavour to retain the one thing needful. Have Jesus in all thy thoughts. Let Him never be out of thy sight. Let the sense of His presence be a guide to thy thoughts, and remember that He hears thy words, and beholds all thy actions. Beseech

Him not to leave thee; but beware that the smallest want of care will cause Him to depart from thee.

I CRIED unto the LORD with my voice: yea, even unto the LORD did I make my supplication.

I poured out my complaints before Him: and shewed Him of my trouble.

When my spirit was in heaviness Thou knewest my path: in the way wherein I walked have they privily laid a snare for me.

I looked also upon my right hand: and saw there was no man that would know me.

I had no place to flee unto: and no man cared for my soul.

I cried unto Thee, O LORD, and said: Thou art my hope, and my portion in the land of the living.

Consider my complaint: for I am brought very low.

O deliver me from my persecutors: for they are too strong for me.

Bring my soul out of prison, that I may give thanks unto Thy name: which thing if Thou wilt grant me, then shall the righteous resort unto my company.

Monday

AFTER FIRST SUNDAY.

AND IT CAME TO PASS, AFTER THREE DAYS THEY FOUND HIM IN THE TEMPLE, SITTING IN THE MIDST OF THE DOCTORS, BOTH HEARING THEM, AND ASKING THEM QUESTIONS.—St. Luke, ii. 46.

AFTER three days of anxious search, the blessed Virgin and St. Joseph re-entered the temple — with what different feelings to those with which they left it! their souls were in dismay; and it is possible that the blessed Virgin went into the sacred building to pour out her griefs before her GOD, and to seek the only true comfort for her distress. Thus, when that sacred ministry was completed, which was at this time, as it were, budding out, our blessed LORD was hidden three days in the tomb. After three days He revealeth Himself again to His followers, who had been, as the blessed Virgin, in distress, because "they had taken away the LORD." Where but in the temple is JESUS to be found? But how is He found? in the midst

of the doctors, as became the modesty of childhood, hearing them; and veiling His eternal wisdom by putting His teaching in the form of questions.

How do we adore the divine humility of the Holy Jesus in bearing Himself as a child; for though His wisdom created astonishment, still He possessed the simplicity of child-like behaviour, and He drew out the wisdom which He taught, instead of speaking it with His own lips.

It is only in the temple that we can find Jesus; if He, after being a light on my ways, and a lantern to my path, leaves me for a season, I shall vainly seek Him anywhere but in His temple. It is a great comfort, when God visits me with a season of dryness and hardness of spirit, to believe that by diligent attendance in His temple and by the reception of His holy communion, I shall, in due time, find Him again. Such trials are not unfrequent, and if I do not allow any creature to take possession of my heart, and go on steadfastly adhering to the laws and precepts He has given me, He may again shew the light of His countenance, and lead me forth beside the waters of comfort.

Take heed, O my soul, lest thou lose thy

gracious Saviour. Keep Him constantly in thy sight; and, by attendance upon His holy ordinances, keep alive in thee the sense of His blessed presence; for if thou lose Him, thou wilt have to seek Him sorrowing.

O GOD, Thou art my God: early will I seek Thee.

My soul thirsteth for Thee, and my flesh also longeth after Thee: in a barren and dry land where no water is.

Thus have I looked for Thee in holiness: that I might behold Thy power and glory.

For Thy loving kindness is better than the life itself: my lips shall praise Thee.

As long as I live will I magnify Thee on this manner: and lift up my hands in Thy Name.

My soul shall be satisfied, even as it were with marrow and fatness: when my mouth praiseth Thee with joyful lips.

Have I not remembered Thee in my bed: and thought upon Thee when I was waking?

Because Thou hast been my helper: therefore under the shadow of Thy wings will I rejoice.

My soul hangeth upon Thee: Thy right hand hath upholden me.

These also that seek the hurt of my soul: they shall go under the earth.

Let them fall upon the edge of the sword: that they may be a portion for foxes.

But the King shall rejoice in God; all they also that swear by Him shall be commended: for the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped.

Tuesday

AFTER FIRST SUNDAY.

WIST YE NOT THAT I MUST BE ABOUT MY FATHER'S BUSINESS?—St. Luke, ii. 49.

I PICTURE to myself the mild look of the holy Child when, gazing in the face of the Virgin and St. Joseph, he saw traces of their late anxiety and trouble.

How is it that ye sought Me: know ye not Who I am? Do ye not remember that He has given His angels charge concerning Me, and that no harm can happen to Me? Have ye forgotten, in attending upon Me from infancy, that I am JESUS? and have the cares of My body obliterated the recollection that I am come to be about My Father's business?

Let me take to myself this mild rebuke, lest, while I have been meditating upon the infancy of our blessed LORD, I may have lost sight of His divinity, in the contemplation of His weak and suffering humanity. He here proclaims to

me that He is the Son of God, that He came to do the will of His Father who sent Him. To do that will was to Him meat and drink; and as it was His Father's will, that of all that He had given Him He should lose nothing, it may be that among those assembled in the temple there were some, who, in the everlasting counsels were fore-ordained to salvation, and that this opening of the Lord's ministry shewed them, or sowed the seeds of an after conviction, that He was the Son of God,—the King of Israel.

What a mighty prospect do these words open to us, "My Father's business;" that business, no less than the salvation of the whole world! O blessed Saviour! how dost thou shew Thy mysterious oneness with the Father in Thy perfect acquiescence with Thy Father's will! What pains, what sorrow does that business bring upon Thee, and yet how ready art Thou for the work. Thy love for us, O my Saviour, surpasses thought or expression; Thou art degraded thus low, and sufferest all for us sinners, vile and reprobate as we are. O make me obedient unto Thee; and by contemplating Thee, and endeavouring to follow the steps of

Thy most holy life, grant that I may seek to do Thy Father's will in all things, and may continually be found in Thy temple, praising and blessing God.

Wednesday

AFTER FIRST SUNDAY.

AND HE WENT DOWN WITH THEM, AND CAME TO NAZARETH, AND WAS SUBJECT TO THEM.—St. Luke, ii. 51.

WHEN JESUS had given His earthly parents the warning that He came to do a higher will than theirs, He put Himself under them, journeyed back to their home, and then "was subject unto them,"—did their will in all things.

I can picture to myself the holy Child employed about the poor cottage in such menial offices as were fitted to His strength. Possibly His parents would have spared Him the rude labour, knowing Who He was, but He took upon Himself such employments as would lighten their burdens; and I can well imagine the tender watchfulness with which He did all, both to save the Blessed Virgin unnecessary labour, and also to prevent her slightest wish. Attentions, how grateful to a mother's feelings,

and which spring from a love lying deep in the heart.

Tradition says that our Lord worked with St. Joseph as a carpenter. The humble circumstances of the holy family might have rendered the assistance necessary for their support, but we need nothing more than to know that our Lord was subject to His parents; that circumstance proves His extreme humility. He, before Whom the heaven and earth do bow and obey; He, Who could have called down twelve legions of angels to His aid, was subject to, and was, in all outward appearances, not above being, the son of a poor carpenter. Every instance of our most loving Saviour's humility makes me stop with wonder, and exclaim:—"Lord, what is man that Thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that Thou visitest him!" Our Blessed Lord, in giving us an example that we should follow His steps, has thus hallowed childhood. In the earlier stages of infancy, and in early childhood, there is a purity, a holy truthfulness, and a confiding honesty, which, alas! too soon get tainted and spotted by the sinfulness of our nature; but our Lord has shewed us how the child ought to go

forward, so as to preserve the robes of his baptism pure and without spot. Subjection, obedience to parents and superiors, is the first, perhaps the *only* duty of children, as all other graces and virtues will issue from that.

To me does this example of our Lord give a lesson. Parental rule is over; but my direct superior is ( ), and to him I must be in subjection.

In a certain sense the priest stands in the place of a parent, and in all spiritual matters I must submit myself to his interpretation of the rules of the Church. My soul, thou must learn this, and be in humble subjection to thy superiors. At first it may be hard to thee, but true peace is found in no other way. Above all, submit thyself willingly to the gentle corrections of thy Heavenly Father; He loveth whom He chasteneth. Grant, O Lord, that I may depend upon Thy infinite power, wisdom, goodness, and promise to take care of me; that I may leave it to Thee to choose what is best, and bear with patience and resignation all Thy fatherly corrections; that I may serve Thee with joy and gladness all my days, in hopes of the inheritance which Thou hast promised to Thy obedient children.

Thursday

AFTER FIRST SUNDAY.

PRESENT YOUR BODIES A LIVING SACRIFICE, HOLY, ACCEPTABLE UNTO GOD, WHICH IS YOUR REASONABLE SERVICE.—Rom. xii. 1.

LET me consider what the sacrifice is that I can offer to GOD. Once I was clean; my soul washed in the regenerating waters of baptism, was placed pure before GOD. Years have passed, and I stand with sin-stained garments, without plea and without excuse, for I have destroyed myself.

My passions have been unmortified; I am so unwatchful over my senses, so inclined to outward things, so negligent in the interior; so prone to laughter, so indisposed to tears and compunction; so prompt to ease, so dull to strictness of life and zeal; so curious to hear news, so slack to embrace what is humble and low; so inconsiderate in speech, so unbridled in silence; so uncomposed in manners, so fretful

in action; so hasty to rest, so slow to labour; so wakeful after trifles, so drowsy at the sacred services; so quickly distracted, so seldom wholly gathered into myself; so suddenly moved to anger, so apt to take offence, so ready to judge, so severe to reprove; so often making resolutions, and yet bringing them to so poor an effect. This, and far more, is what I am; this is what I have to offer unto God!

Behold me, Lord! behold me; poor, miserable, wretched sinner. Deep calleth unto deep; the depth of my misery to the depth of Thy compassion. Take me, gracious Saviour; I resign myself unto Thee. Upon the altar of Thy mercy I lay my whole self, soul and body, mind and thoughts. Oh! let the precious blood of Thy dearly beloved Son flow all over me to purify me; and then send down Thy fire from heaven, even the grace of Thy Holy Spirit, and reform me, so that I may be, in truth, holy unto Thee.

My soul, thou art to be a living sacrifice unto Thy Lord, holy, and so acceptable. Consider thy many infirmities, and lament over them; the Lord will not despise the broken and contrite heart, and will accept the sacrifices of an humble

spirit. Resolve from henceforth to act as not belonging to thyself, but to God. Thou hast sacrificed thyself to Him, but thou must, in consequence, keep thyself more strictly as the temple of His Spirit; let thy sacrifice be holy, and then He will accept it.

But to keep alive the remembrance that thou hast offered thyself to God, thou must ever be actively employed; thou must be always improving, or thou wilt go down, down, until, instead of reaching unto heaven thou wilt fall into hell. Continually strive to keep thyself always stretched, as it were, on the altar of God; let thy prayers, thine alms, thy fasting, thy self-denial, be ever offered up with thyself; and be constantly applying the healing balsam of thy Saviour's blood to thy wounds by the frequent reception of the Holy Eucharist. This is thy reasonable service, this the only way in which thou canst render thanks and praise for all the goodness of the Lord. "Offer unto God thanksgiving, and pay thy vows to the Most High: and call upon Me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me."

O LORD, open Thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth Thy praise.

For Thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: Thou delightest not in burnt offering.

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.

Do good in Thy good pleasure unto Zion: build Thou the walls of Jerusalem.

Then shalt Thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon Thine altar.

Friday

AFTER FIRST SUNDAY.

NOT TO THINK OF HIMSELF MORE HIGHLY THAN HE OUGHT TO THINK; BUT TO THINK SOBERLY, ACCORDING AS GOD HATH DEALT TO EVERY MAN THE MEASURE OF FAITH.—Rom. xii. 3.

AFTER having offered up my whole self to God, I go on in the epistle for this week, and I find the command,—"not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think." The reason of this must be, that having become, as it were, more peculiarly God's property by the "offering of ourselves," I may be apt to consider myself better than others; that I am set apart and have done that which others have not done. This is spiritual pride, a great, an enormous sin, so subtle, that it may creep in and cover my holiest things with its loathsome slime.

How humiliating is it to think that, after having continued fervent in prayer, ardent in love, constant at communion, diligent in alms,

frequent in fasting, I may come out of my closet, and, meeting my neighbour, may think, "Stand apart, I am holier than thou." The words may not have been said, the thought may not have been formed, but there may have been a feeling of superiority, which feeling alone will undo, in an instant, all my prayers, communions, alms, and all the fervours and ardours which I have been fostering. God grant me to avoid and to keep away this great sin! Refrain my soul, and keep it low, like as a child that is weaned from his mother.

I am to think soberly, to weigh over my merits and demerits, my advantages and disadvantages; for God has measured out to me the measure of faith that is to be my portion.

To all persons God has committed some talent, some moral, intellectual, or spiritual endowments, which are to be cultivated and improved as much as possible. Especially any spiritual gifts that I may possess I must be aware of, and ought to thank God for them. To pretend I have them not, would be hypocrisy; but I must not make a parade of such favours; and, above all, I must bear in mind that the poorest creature in the world may have much higher gifts

than has fallen to my lot. God's gifts are hidden; and if I despise one of His little ones, I may at last discover, under that unpretending exterior, not only *my* talent, the cause of all my pride, but ten other talents brighter and higher than mine, which raise their possessor to the highest place, while I with shame begin to take the lowest room.

My soul, thou must steadily combat any of the advances of this pride. Do but consider the number of thy defects, and the difficulty which, in spite of thy knowledge of all thy Saviour has done for thee, thou hast in preventing their outbreak, and thou wilt see that thou hast no real reason for thinking of thyself more highly than thou oughtest to think. Cultivate, and endeavour to deserve, an increase of that faith which God deals out to thee by measure; and when thou hast done all, think upon the undue proportion of grace thou hast received, after thy manifold backslidings; then smite thyself and exclaim, God be merciful unto me a sinner. Shall I speak unto the Lord, since I am but dust and ashes? If I esteem myself to be anything more, behold Thou standest by me, and my iniquities bear witness, and I cannot contradict it.

But if I abase myself, and reduce myself to nothing, and shrink from all self-esteem, and grind myself to (what I am) dust, Thy grace will be favourable to me, and Thy light near unto my heart; and all self-esteem, how little soever, shall be swallowed up in the valley of my nothingness, and perish for ever.

There Thou shewest Thyself unto me what I am, what I have been, and whither I am come; for I am nothing and knew it not.

If I be left to myself, behold, I become mere weakness; but if Thou for an instant look upon me, I am forthwith strong and am filled with new joy.

Blessed be Thou my God; for although I be unworthy of any benefits, yet Thy noble bounty and infinite goodness never cease to do good, even to the ungrateful, and to those who are turned away far from Thee.

Turn Thou us unto Thee, that we may be thankful, humble and devout; for Thou art our salvation, our courage, and our strength.

Saturday

AFTER FIRST SUNDAY.

SO WE, BEING MANY, ARE ONE BODY IN CHRIST, AND EVERY ONE MEMBERS ONE OF ANOTHER.—Romans, xii. 5.

I HAVE thought upon the necessity of presenting myself a living sacrifice to GOD; I have considered the danger I am in from spiritual pride; but on looking round me I think,—how do I consider all the benefits, and temptations, and privileges, which I am encompassed with, as belonging to myself alone! I have been meditating as if I only were the object of GOD's mercies; but I look round me and I see many pressing forward towards the mark of the same high calling, and then I remember that I am but one of many—one of a body—whose Head is CHRIST. I must therefore not press forward alone, as an isolated and independent being; but must join in fellowship with the other members of that glorious body, and lend my feeble help in doing homage to its divine Head.

I picture to myself the holy Church throughout all the world. The glorious assemblage of patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, with the spirits of just men made perfect, and those who still live in the faith on earth. These are the "many," the one body in CHRIST; into this body have I been admitted by baptism; I am an unworthy member; the last and lowest of this vast company. We have all drunk of the same spiritual rock; all perform some office in the membership of the body; all depend upon the direction of its Great Head; with it I partake of the bread broken, even the communion of the body of CHRIST, and of the cup of blessing, even the communion of the blood of CHRIST. I feel the inestimable privilege of communion with all the holy members of this body, whether in the flesh or gone to their rest; and with them I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Even in the lowest place, O LORD, but still among the number of Thine elect, I beseech Thee to bring me to partake of the glories of Thy Church triumphant, when the voice, as a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thundering shall say, Alleluia, for the LORD

God Omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad, and rejoice, and give honour to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready, and to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, for the clean linen is the righteousness of saints.

My soul turn with all love and thankfulness to God, Who hath done such great things for thee; thou hast been made a member of His holy and mystical body. Such a privilege entails upon Thee much responsibility: thou art a member of Christ; thou hast to do the work of a member; ponder well what that work is, and whether it be as one of the lower, or as one, who working nearer the head, is more particularly in the presence of that divine Head, do thy best to work in concert with thy fellow-members, that thy faint voice may ascend with the great chorus of the Church universal, praying with all prayer and supplication for repentance, faith, love, and for that unity and concord which will unite the whole blessed company as a glorious body with a most glorious Head round the throne of God, there to praise and magnify Him from everlasting to everlasting.

O ALMIGHTY God, Who hath built Thy Church upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the head corner-stone; grant us so to be joined together in unity of spirit by their doctrine, that we may be made an holy temple acceptable unto Thee; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Second Sunday after Epiphany.

THERE WAS A MARRIAGE IN CANA OF GALILEE.—St. John, ii. 1.

HOW happy was this marriage which our Blessed LORD was pleased to honour with His presence, and His first miracle! He was the author and institutor of marriage, and was pleased to give it a sanction and a blessing by assisting at it.

Let me remember that He, our Blessed Saviour, came to marry, as it were, by His incarnation, our human nature with His divine person; He came to marry Himself to His Church, and has raised Christian matrimony to a high dignity, as being a sacred and mysterious sign of that His perpetual union with His Church.

Let me remember that in the midst of the marriage feast the wine was wanting; how deceitful are the pleasures of the world, how often they fail us when we expect most from them. It is JESUS alone that can furnish our immortal

souls with the true wine which maketh glad the heart of man; He only can present us with pure delights; and He alone can turn the tasteless, even the bitter things which are set before us, into that which strengthens and refreshes the weary soul.

The first miracle of our Lord was a forerunner and prelude to that last and greatest miracle which He wrought at His last supper, and which He is now continually working for those who are elect and precious in His sight. Behold His table spread; the bread and wine thereon become to the faithful soul of the true believer His body and blood! O marvellous love of our gracious Saviour! To the faithful soul He gives Himself! Consider this, O my soul, and join with the Church in celebrating with love and gratitude this miracle which is the forerunner of all thy good; it exhibits thy Lord to thee changing water into wine; and by the eye of faith thou lookest forward and seest Him giving Himself to be thy spiritual sustenance, if only thou do, as the servants at the marriage in Cana, whatever He saith unto you.

LIKE as the hart desireth the water-brooks: so longeth my soul after Thee, O God.

My soul is athirst for God, yea, even for the living God: when shall I come to appear before the presence of God.

My tears have been my meat day and night: while they daily say unto me, Where is now thy God?

Now when I think thereupon, I pour out my heart by myself: for I went with the multitude, and brought them forth into the house of God;

In the voice of praise and thanksgiving: among such as keep holy-day.

Why art thou so full of heaviness, O my soul: and why art thou so disquieted within me?

Put thy trust in God: for I will yet give Him thanks for the help of His countenance.

Monday

AFTER SECOND SUNDAY.

BUT THOU HAST KEPT THE GOOD WINE UNTIL NOW.—
St. John ii. 10.

I PICTURE to myself the room in which the marriage feast is held; there sits the meek and blessed Virgin; there also is JESUS. The feast proceeds; but, owing to the poverty of the entertainers, there is not enough wine for the guests. Mark the mother of JESUS turning and saying to Him, "There is no wine;" and after, the words spoken to her in return, which show that no human tie must draw Him from His ministry; mark the way in which she enjoins obedience to His commands. The servants are told by JESUS to fill the water pots with water; the divine command with which He spoke must have inspired them with awe, or, in spite of the Virgin's injunction, they might have objected to pouring in water when the question was about wine; but much more would they have demurred

to obey the command of "Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast;" but "they bare it," and when the governor tasted the water which had been made wine, they knew whence it was, and so had the privilege of those who minister unto CHRIST in holy things. The governor of the feast called the bridegroom, and seemed to remonstrate upon the unusual proceeding, saying, "Thou hast kept the good wine until now." Blessed JESUS! Thou hast indeed turned water into wine, Thou art ever merciful and pitiful; and it is to the poor in spirit and the humble, that Thou showest Thy tenderness and compassion.

The empty vessels of human nature were filled to the brim, but with the observance of the law; it was not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats could take away sins, neither could water wash away the impurities of the soul, until CHRIST came, and forthwith the water is made wine; and truly may we say, when we have been washed in the waters of baptism, and are made partakers of the wine of the chalice, when we feel the strengthening and refreshing of our souls, "Thou hast kept the good wine until now."

The good wine, that which maketh glad the heart of man, and which is to be kept in new bottles, in hearts prepared and seasoned for its reception, is of sovereign efficacy for the diseases of the soul; but we must repair to the feast with Jesus; He alone can make it wine to us; and only those whom He commands can serve us with it. As we go on in faith receiving this, it will become to us better and better, until when at the last we shall be more perfectly prepared to meet the Lord, all the occasions of receiving His benefits will become more precious to us, and we shall confess that He has "kept the good wine until now."

My soul, go on thy way obeying the commands which the Church lays upon thee; she tells thee to do as Jesus commands thee; follow Him, and do as He desires in all things. Thou mayest have to walk on thy way without seeing any of the fruits of thy obedience; but the time will come when thou hast filled thy vessel unto the brim, that when it is drawn out it will be found wine; thou wilt have gone on in faith, but thou wilt have thy reward, for thy best will be saved until the last.

Tuesday

AFTER SECOND SUNDAY.

BE KINDLY AFFECTIONED ONE TO ANOTHER WITH BROTHERLY LOVE; IN HONOUR PREFERRING ONE ANOTHER.—Rom. xii. 10.

IN my course through the world there is nothing more difficult to manage, according to the wishes and rules of a Christian, than intercourse with others. Our duties to God are uninterrupted by conflicting duties. He is all perfect; entire obedience to His law is our duty and our peace, and then His service is perfect freedom. Intercourse with our neighbour is a very different thing. I find defects in others which jar against my feelings; my defects probably hurt others. Harsh constructions are put on actions; wrong meanings given to words; and, even in the most friendly meetings, much is said, many idle words, much unseemly laughter, and jesting that is not convenient, remove the recollection of Whose we are and Whom we serve.

Such things ought not to be; but it is most difficult to rule ourselves when the actions of others are in the way. The epistle for this week gives many subjects whence, I trust, by profitable meditation, to bring out something useful for my guidance.

I must imagine myself one of a large family, the great Christian family; in such a family there must be harmony, or all happiness is lost. Be kindly affectioned one towards another is the command; this is full of deep meaning; kindly, tenderly, gently, considerately affectioned. How does it imply self put aside; the happiness of others, not only thought of, but studied; *their* wishes the rule of *my* actions; *their* likings consulted, *mine* put aside; all this done *by* me; and again, all this done *for* me, not as a dry matter of course, but springing from that tender love, that generous affection, which ought to be seen in all Christian families. And we are a family; we have the same heavenly Father; we are nourished and instructed by the same mother; we have been cleansed by the same washing; we are fed with the same food; we have the same hopes of redemption, and the same aspirations after Heaven.

How ought I then to be active in love for my brethren in Christ Jesus! how ought I to see in every one the purchase of His precious blood; and in our community of transgressions and fellowship in pardon and grace, how ought I to be drawn towards each one for whom the cross was endured, and the shame suffered!

My soul, let the fountains of thy tenderness be open for thy brethren; see in every one a representative to thee of thy dear Saviour; be pitiful, be courteous, mind not the world, but let brotherly love continue in thee, and prefer every one before thee in honour. Care not who it is, all are equally brethren; servants, poor, every one is thy brother and thy equal in Christ Jesus. And to every one thou must be kindly affectioned with brotherly love; esteem every one higher than thyself, as thou well mayest, for behold, the number of thy sins! thou must, after that sight, in honour prefer others. If thou dost not love thy brother whom thou hast seen, how canst thou love God whom thou hast not seen? Let this shew thee the connection between thy brotherly love and thy love to God; be entirely melted in kindly affection for thy brother, and then wilt thou be ready to receive that higher

and nobler love for God, which is thy true life. Elevated and purified by the self-forgetting love which hopeth all things, believeth all things, which suffereth long, and is kind, thou wilt be truly a child of Him Who is love, and Who declares that they who dwell in love dwell in Him.

BEHOLD, how good and joyful a thing it is: brethren, to dwell together in unity!

It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down unto the beard: even unto Aaron's beard, and went down to the skirts of his clothing.

Like as the dew of Hermon: which fell upon the hill of Sion.

For there the Lord promised His blessing: and life for evermore.

Wednesday

AFTER SECOND SUNDAY.

NOT SLOTHFUL IN BUSINESS; FERVENT IN SPIRIT; SERVING THE LORD.—Rom. xii. 11.

THERE is very much difficulty in so ordering worldly business, as to make it serve as a step onward in the Christian course, and not a hinderance and drawback to it.

I find that business is sometimes pursued eagerly when there is any evident gain to come of it, or the approbation of man is likely to attend it; and then it is often followed without check and measure, and excludes other higher duties, even those which I owe to GOD.

Sometimes, on the other hand, business is distasteful; I would be about something else; I have a book to read, I wish to visit a friend, &c. Then I find the business which comes in the usual daily course in my way, not to my mind; I am idle, I find a thousand excuses for not doing it thoroughly.

Every one has some worldly vocation to follow, whether man or woman, rich or poor, child or aged; every one has something which his or her station in life makes a duty or a business. If the business is not to gain the daily bread, it may be to assist others; if it be not in attending to the wants and cares of a family, it may be in watching over sickness, want, and sorrow. In every situation in life there is a business to be done, and that business must be performed diligently.

My special business is ( ), and how to discharge it faithfully, without giving too much to outward things, too little to God, is the question. Why not give *all* to God? Business as well as recreation, dealings with others as well as prayers, may be offered up to God if undertaken with a proper spirit. Sloth is sure to creep over me if I do not endeavour to maintain fervour of spirit; and neither will be in my power if I serve not the Lord.

My soul, thou must persevere in this; and whether thou walkest in the house or goest abroad, whether thou art employed with thy hands or thy head, do all as to the Lord; then it will not signify if thy avocation necessarily interrupt thy set times for devotion; thou art about

that which is the LORD's, and He will accept it as such.

Resolve, however, not to be content to make a *general* offering of thy daily work to GOD; dedicate each part of thy business by a short mental ejaculation, so raising thy spirit and serving thy GOD in a particular manner by each separate act. Thus, in commencing business, "Into Thy hands I commit myself, and all that I do." On leaving thy house in the morning, say, "Shew me Thy ways, O LORD, teach me Thy paths; lead me, O LORD, in the way of Thy truth. O give Thine angels charge over me, to keep me in all Thy ways."

When thou art disposed to be angry, say, "Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest for your souls."

Before any action say, "Grant, O LORD, that I may do this to Thy glory and my soul's health."

When awake in the night, think of thy LORD before Pilate, St. Peter's tears, St. Peter in prison, or Paul and Silas praising GOD while all others slept: "To Thee, gracious LORD, I determine to dedicate my mind and my thoughts, my reason and all my faculties, my senses and limbs, my life and my death, from henceforth for ever."

Thursday

AFTER SECOND SUNDAY.

REJOICING IN HOPE; PATIENT IN TRIBULATION; CONTINUING INSTANT IN PRAYER.—Romans, xii. 12.

AND now what is my hope? truly my hope is even in Thee. When I think upon my hope I see nothing but the cross, the sufferings of the Crucified, the blood of JESUS; these are my hope. Without these there would have been no place for repentance, I could not have appeased an offended GOD; heaven would have been shut, and an angel with a flaming sword would have kept me from approaching the gates of paradise.

But CHRIST has suffered, His precious blood poured out upon the cross has satisfied the Divine justice, and the bright rays of hope are shed around me, shewing in the distance a loving Saviour stretching out His arms to welcome me to the heavenly mansions which are the purchase of His great sufferings, and exceeding love. What matters it if, before I reach

that point, tribulations and anguish and sorrow beset my path? Still the brightness of hope shews me the same happy prospect. I rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, and I desire to rejoice to be a "partaker of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory shall be revealed, I may be glad also with exceeding joy."

But tribulation *must* come before His glory will be revealed; therefore let me "run with patience the race that is set before me, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of my faith;" and, when I am tempted to impatience, let me "consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest I be weary and faint in my mind."

However great my sufferings, I desire to hold by the cross, getting strength out of my weakness by the recollection that "whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth;" "Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees," "continuing instant in prayer." I am to pray—to pray without ceasing; to be instant, importunate in prayer. I must pray for hope, pray for patience; not once or occasionally, but constantly, earnestly, eagerly, with

tears, and groans, and smiting of the breast. However gloomy my path may be, whatever sorrows may encompass me, if I am instant in prayer, I must be patient in tribulation; and then shall I rejoice in hope. My soul, this is a glorious end and aim of thy existence, for I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us; therefore go on in much prayer, in earnest, instant, often repeated prayer; with heart always lifted heavenward, always tuned to prayer. Go on in patience, unrepining, steadfast, meek patience; looking up to that Heavenly Father, Who chasteneth those whom He receiveth; and rejoice in the Lord always. He is thy hope and thy exceeding great reward, and He will continue to send down such bright beams of hope on thy path as will cause thee most abundantly to rejoice.

Friday

AFTER SECOND SUNDAY.

DISTRIBUTING TO THE NECESSITY OF SAINTS; GIVEN TO HOSPITALITY.—Romans, xii. 13.

IN the days of primitive Christianity, these injunctions had a somewhat different meaning to what they present to us now. In the time when "that way was every where spoken against," every kind of assistance was denied to Christians; they were persecuted, and were entirely dependent in their distress upon their brethren. Therefore it was a duty not only to aid them when they were in want, but it was also necessary, when they had to travel, either on missions to spread the glad tidings of salvation, or on any business whatsoever, to afford them shelter and entertainment, and to use hospitality, without grudging, towards them. That these assistances were not rendered in most cases without much inconvenience and risk to those who thus ministered of their substance

cannot be doubted. They were in most cases poor themselves; but they remembered, that "whoso seeth his brother hath need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion against him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" and they had all things in common.

All the precepts of the blessed gospel are binding; and making allowance for altered circumstances, they must be practised literally and fully. How am I to understand these injunctions which I am now considering—distributing to the necessities of saints? The saints are those who are elected members of the kingdom of heaven. Who are they? the baptized. Therefore, in a wide sense, I may understand in the saints all members of the Church. There are different kinds of necessities to which I may be called upon to minister. The poor and needy require such alms and assistances of money, food, and clothes as is in my power to bestow, not forgetting the Christian sympathy which springs out of the love which one member of the great family ought to bear to another. The necessities of others may not extend beyond that kindly sympathy which a soul in distress feels to be the oil and wine poured into its wounds. This is a

great necessity, and the power to minister to it will only spring up from the deep fount of love which a Christian soul treasures up from the constant meditation on his Saviour's merits, and which will overflow when witnessing the sufferings of a brother, and endeavouring to soothe those pains, which but for that Saviour would have been intolerable.

The precepts of the gospel hang together so entirely that it is impossible to divide them, and endeavour to practise one and omit the rest. How can I practise the virtue of hospitality and of ministering to the necessities of the saints, without having first cultivated that brotherly love which must be real and without dissimulation? How can I love, without a hope of return, either in this world or the next? How can I be patient in sorrow without that hope? How can I pray, without the hope of being heard and answered? Then must I also be active always about my Father's work, with fixed and fervent spirit seeking to do His service, and, as a matter of necessity, a forwardness in helping the brethren in any of their distresses and troubles, will be the consequence of cultivating the former virtues.

My soul, every day, every hour brings before

thee something fresh to be done; some additional reason for leaving all thoughts of self, and attaching thyself to improve love to thy neighbour and thy God.

Every fresh precept shews how utterly incompatible is all thought of self with that love; therefore, go on, endeavouring by thy thought for the wants of others to lose all thought of thine own ease and comfort. Make their distresses and troubles thine own, and by distributing to their necessities, and by using hospitality to those who require it, "thou wilt not only supply the wants of His saints, but thou wilt find it abundant by many thanksgivings unto God."

Saturday

AFTER SECOND SUNDAY.

REJOICE WITH THEM THAT DO REJOICE, AND WEEP WITH THEM THAT WEEP.—Rom. xii. 15.

IT is not one of the most easy things which we are called upon to do in our Christian course, *really* to rejoice with those who rejoice; and yet I must consider how very necessary it is to cultivate the spirit which renders it possible. As a member of the one body, of which CHRIST is the head, it cannot be but that I must feel what affects my fellow members, unless I be not a living member. I may feel sure that if I do not partake in the feelings of my fellow members, I am, so to say, dead; and if I feel only in part, I am numbed; and if my spiritual warmth is not revived, I shall soon be dead, and only fit to be cast away as refuse and useless.

St. Paul says, "Whether one member suffer all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured all the members rejoice with it."

I may therefore be certain that [illegible]
with my brethren. I am [illegible]
danger, and must bestir myself [illegible]
and increase that spirit of [illegible]
[illegible] with the [illegible]
[illegible]

[illegible] member of [illegible]
[illegible] in some [illegible]
[illegible] The joys [illegible]
[illegible] there [illegible]
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[illegible] surely, [illegible]
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[illegible] I am
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in one of his flock, and says, "Rejoice with me, I have found my sheep that I lost."

But alas! in this world of sin and misery how much oftener have we to weep; our sympathies are oftener called out for sorrow than for joy, and inasmuch as sin defiles and taints our best actions, and we are accustomed to look at things through the misty atmosphere of a corrupt nature, it is easier to weep and lament than to rejoice. I must weep for those who are in doubts, in difficulties, and dangers; for the spiritually destitute, the spiritually dead. It may be that tears may awaken some, they surely will assuage the grief of the poor weak member who is trying to walk in the paths of righteousness, but who is discouraged and tempted to despair, not only by the difficulties which beset his way, but also by the dryness of his own spirit. A few kind words, even a kind look, a tear in the eye, may help such a one, and woe be to me if I afford not such assistance.

My soul, this is what thou owest to others, and what thou mayest expect from others, if thy lot is cast among true members of Christ's body. Christian sympathy is one of the great

helps to those who are walking through this world; but if it please God to deny thee the blessing of sympathy during thy course, thou must be content to walk on, turning neither to the right nor to the left, but using such helps as thy heavenly Father vouchsafes thee. An unhealthy longing for sympathy may lead thee aside from the right path; therefore, if such be thy Father's will, submit to it as to any other of His decrees; but if He, in His abundant mercy, allows thee the privilege of sympathy from a brother, use it as a boon, which thou hast to answer for, and which thou must repay to thy brethren by more earnestly rejoicing with those who rejoice, and weeping with those who weep.

Third Sunday after Epiphany.

BE NOT WISE IN YOUR OWN CONCEITS.—Rom. xii. 16.

THERE is one part of wisdom in which all ought to endeavour to excel—the knowledge of ourselves. It calls for our incessant care and attention, and is truly the hardest of all lessons; truly to know myself, is, I feel, and sorrowfully must confess, to despise myself. I must therefore endeavour to attain this self-knowledge, which will be the only way to avoid the defect against which St. Paul warns me. This self-knowledge is not to be had without much, frequent, and serious consideration. I must begin by considering attentively my extraction and origin; what I have been, what I am now; such thoughts must humble me. I am a child of the dust, I inherit corruption; my every thought, instead of making me conceited at its wisdom, will show me how very far gone I am in sin, and how my holiest things are tainted with my inherent corruption. I must consider also the many

miseries I daily lie under; the strength of my passions and self-love; the small light that is in me for discerning true good from that which is only so in appearance; my perpetual repugnance to taking true pains for acquiring real good; and the extreme bent of my inclinations to evil.

I must think how soon death will be with me, and then my body will be given to worms, my soul to the bar of justice. There can be no doubt of my lot there, if I judge by my deserts; and how can I then nourish any pride or self-satisfaction; how can I be wise in my own conceit?

Enter into thyself, O my soul, and discover all thy maladies, find out the secret ambushes of the enemy; learn to discern between the motives of nature and of grace, watch over thy heart, regulate thy affections and inclinations, guard against thy passions, and order thy whole interior in such a manner as to be agreeable to Him Who has promised to make it His everlasting temple.

O Lord, how, after this view, doth my heart melt with gratitude to Thee, Who, of Thy free unmerited grace, hast redeemed me from the body of this death; I thank Thee, O merciful Saviour, for humbling Thyself to look upon such

a creature as I am, and I beseech Thee to grant me grace to know myself, and also, to give me grace to know Thee.

BOW down Thine ear, O Lord, and hear me: for I am poor and in misery.

Preserve Thou my soul, for I am holy: my God, save Thy servant that putteth his trust in Thee.

Be merciful unto me, O Lord: for I will call daily upon Thee.

Comfort the soul of Thy servant: for unto Thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.

For Thou, Lord, art good and gracious: and of great mercy unto all them that call upon Thee.

Give ear, Lord, unto my prayer: and ponder the voice of my humble desires.

In the time of my trouble I will call upon Thee: for Thou hearest me.

Among the gods there is none like unto Thee, O Lord: there is not one that can do as Thou doest.

All nations whom Thou hast made shall come and worship Thee, O Lord: and shall glorify Thy Name.

For Thou art great, and doest wondrous things: Thou art God alone.

Teach me Thy way, O Lord; and I will walk in Thy truth: O knit my heart unto Thee, that I may fear Thy Name.

I will thank Thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart: and I will praise Thy Name for evermore.

For great is Thy mercy toward me: and Thou hast delivered my soul from the nethermost hell.

O God, the proud are risen against me, and the congregations of naughty men have sought after my soul: and have not set Thee before their eyes.

But Thou, O Lord God, art full of compassion and mercy: long-suffering, plenteous in goodness and truth.

O turn Thee unto me, and have mercy upon me: give Thy strength unto Thy servant, and help the son of Thine handmaid.

Shew some token upon me for good, that they who hate me may see it, and be ashamed: because Thou, Lord, hast holpen me, and comforted me.

Monday

AFTER THIRD SUNDAY.

LORD, IF THOU WILT, THOU CANST MAKE ME CLEAN.—
St. Matthew, viii. 2.

JESUS had come down from the mountain on which He had been instructing the multitudes in that divine sermon, which must have attached them to Him, for they were following Him, marking every motion and every word which proceeded from His lips. Suddenly, there appeared a man advancing rapidly towards Him; and when those who were coming along with the LORD, perceived that the man was covered with the most loathsome leprosy, they shrunk back. JESUS alone avoided not the poor wretch, who with eager looks, imploring gestures, and arms stretched out, fell down at His blessed feet, and gasped out, "LORD, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean!" Behold the prostrate form of the leper, panting and trembling in the earnestness

of his prayer, before the divine, meek, majestic, yet lowly form of the blessed JESUS!

I have here to remark the single, simple, unhesitating faith of the poor leper. He saw himself a miserable diseased creature, loathsome, offensive, whose very touch was pollution, avoided by every one. He knew that there was One by Whom all his disease and pollutions could be cleansed. He comes straight to Him; asks no questions; makes no conditions; he sees in JESUS, GOD, all-powerful, all-merciful, and he falls prostrate, saying, "LORD, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean."

My soul, thou art sin-stained, polluted, leprous; if even thy nearest and dearest friends were to see all thy uncleanness, they would shrink back from thee. Hast thou faith? Dost thou know thy Saviour? Art thou fully persuaded that He is mighty, all-powerful to save? If thou hast such faith, if thou canst cast thyself wholly before Him, reserving nothing, concealing nothing, but shewing Him thy sores, thy blemishes and thy wretchedness, then throw thyself before Him, and say humbly, with sighs and tears, but still with firm confidence, LORD, if Thou wilt,—if Thou wilt look upon such a

wretched, shunned, miserable creature, Thou canst make me clean.

Resolve steadily to search out all thy failings and sins, and hurts, and endeavour to attain that sublime highth of faith which, irrespectively of any other considerations, shews the wounds unto the Saviour, in the full confidence that He will hear thy earnest prayer, and will cleanse thee from thy sin.

O LORD, rebuke me not in Thine indignation: neither chasten me in Thy displeasure.

Have mercy upon me, O LORD, for I am weak: O LORD, heal me, for my bones are vexed.

My soul also is sore troubled: but, LORD, how long wilt Thou punish me?

Turn Thee, O LORD, and deliver my soul: O save me for Thy mercy's sake.

For in death no man remembereth Thee: and who will give Thee thanks in the pit?

I am weary of my groaning: every night wash I my bed, and water my couch with my tears.

My beauty is gone for very trouble: and worn away because of all mine enemies.

Away from me, all ye that work vanity: for the LORD hath heard the voice of my weeping.

The LORD hath heard my petition: the LORD will receive my prayer.

All mine enemies shall be confounded, and sore vexed: they shall be turned back, and put to shame suddenly.

Tuesday

AFTER THIRD SUNDAY.

AND JESUS PUT FORTH HIS HAND, AND TOUCHED HIM, SAYING, I WILL; BE THOU CLEAN. AND IMMEDIATELY HIS LEPROSY WAS CLEANSED. — St. Matthew, viii. 3.

I SEE JESUS standing; the leper prostrate before Him: JESUS puts forth His hand; He stretches it forth, and as the multitudes are marvelling at the extraordinary action, He touches the impure and corrupt body of the leper, and answers his request, point by point, "I will; be thou clean." See the astonishment of the beholders; even the leper himself, full of faith as he was, could not have been prepared for so instantaneous a cure; for immediately the leprosy was cleansed. Behold the change from the extreme of disease, offensive, horrible, to a perfect cleansing away of every impurity, an entire renovation of the whole man. O LORD, how wonderful are Thy works! Thy thoughts are very deep!

Our blessed Lord touched the leper. He, the all-pure, all-holy, could touch the unclean without contracting any impurity. His touch was health; and His word implied the authority which made His touch healing. "I will;" as man, He could will: "be thou clean;" as God, He had power to effect His will; as God, His touch became healing, as it also implied that He could do, what no other could do — touch leprosy without defilement. As man also, He touched the leper, taking his impurity upon Him — cleansing the leper by becoming legally unclean Himself; for, "surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows."

The leprosy of the body is the great type of sin — that dreadful leprosy of the soul. To cure us of this taint did our Lord come in the flesh; and He it was Who consented to be wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. Do we come to Him at baptism? behold Jesus stretching forth His hand and saying, "I will; be thou clean." Do I kneel before Him, day by day, and pouring out my soul in confession, beseech His pardon? behold Jesus puts forth His hand,

saying, "I will; be thou clean." Do I come to Him at the Holy Communion, seeking pardon, strength, and grace? behold JESUS puts forth His hand, and says, "I will; be thou clean." Every time we see His priest holding forth the golden keys — every time we seek Him in penitence and faith, He — JESUS, our Saviour and our GOD — puts forth His hand, touches us, and says, "I will; be thou clean."

My soul, prostrate thyself before thy gracious and merciful Saviour in deep humility, in lively faith, in earnest penitence; beseech Him to cleanse thee from the leprosy of thy many sins, and say, "LORD, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean:" and though thou canst not hear with the leper the gracious words, nor feel the touch of the blessed hand, thou wilt know by the increase of thy love, thy penitence and thy devotion, that JESUS is there, and thou wilt feel that thy leprosy has been cleansed. Resolve to keep always before thee the loathsomeness of sin, the desire of being cleansed, and also the fear of relapsing into the dreadful state from which thy Saviour has redeemed thee.

PUT me not to rebuke, O Lord, in Thine anger: neither chasten me in Thy heavy displeasure.

For thine arrows stick fast in me: and Thy hand presseth me sore.

There is no health in my flesh, because of Thy displeasure: neither is there any rest in my bones, by reason of my sin.

For my wickednesses are gone over my head: and are like a sore burden, too heavy for me to bear.

My wounds stink, and are corrupt: through my foolishness.

I am brought into so great trouble and misery: that I go mourning all the day long.

For my loins are filled with a sore disease: and there is no whole part in my body.

I am feeble, and sore smitten: I have roared for the very disquietness of my heart.

Lord, Thou knowest all my desire: and my groaning is not hid from Thee.

My heart panteth, my strength hath failed me: and the sight of mine eyes is gone from me.

Forsake me not, O Lord my God: be not Thou far from me.

Haste Thee to help me: O Lord God of my salvation.

Wednesday

AFTER THIRD SUNDAY.

AND JESUS SAITH UNTO HIM, SEE THOU TELL NO MAN; BUT GO THY WAY, SHEW THYSELF TO THE PRIEST, AND OFFER THE GIFT THAT MOSES COMMANDED, FOR A TESTIMONY UNTO THEM.—St. Matt. viii. 4.

THE leper stands before the holy JESUS, cleansed; and no doubt in his transports of joy and gratitude was anxious to do some great thing, to testify his love to the merciful LORD Who had dealt so lovingly with him. But JESUS calmed his raptures by saying, "See thou tell no man." Perhaps he might have been tempted to boasting and vain glory. Our LORD desires him not to forget that though he has found a Saviour, yet that he is still under the law, and must submit to the ordinances by going to the priest, who would verify his cure by offering the gifts commanded by Moses, as a testimony against those who might gainsay his recovery, or doubt of the power that effected it.

"See that thou tell no man." How am I to understand this, but as a command not to be given to speak too freely on the concerns of my soul, lest I be tempted to vain-glorious boasting. A certain reserve on religious subjects is very requisite; we must ponder things in our hearts, or the effects and impressions may not be lasting, and all may end in words.

In another place, our Lord commands him who has been healed, to "go and tell his friends what great things God had done for him." And this shews that an opposite extreme must be avoided; to the world in general we must be silent — to our friends we may open our heart, and tell what great things God has done for us. Our Blessed Lord may have had a two-fold reason for desiring the man to show himself to the priest: He may have desired to give the priest an opportunity of being converted, by witnessing the miracle which had been performed: He may hav wished to leave no part of the law unfufilled, so that no room might be left to His enemies to blaspheme.

I must in this history remark the manner in which our Lord suppressed the enthusiasm of the leper. Every one, when any great benefit

has been bestowed upon him, feels anxious to testify his gratitude in some marked way, and, by doing something extreme, to mark his sense of the benefit conferred. By the manner in which our Lord treated the leper, I may infer that when a soul has been cleansed from sin, and when feelings of the liveliest gratitude and love to God are uppermost in the mind, the temptation is to endeavour to serve Him with an overheated zeal, instead of going on earnestly and steadily in the path directly pointed out by God's providence, by quelling the tempestuous emotions of the heart, and by doing God's will in fulfilling the letter of the law, leaving this higher state of fervour and rapture, until the soul has proceeded, after its cleansing, to show the efficacy of its cure by steady continuance in well-doing.

My soul, consider these things, and be not forward in proclaiming thyself to all men. Seek not thyself, but have the glory of God always before thee, which will be thy guide as to when, and how, thou mayest talk of the manifold mercies which thy Saviour has granted thee. Then proceed in thy appointed round of duties, that thy conduct may be a testimony unto all men, and that thou mayest not be a cause that the Word of God be blasphemed.

Thursday

AFTER THIRD SUNDAY.

LORD, I AM NOT WORTHY THAT THOU SHOULDEST COME UNDER MY ROOF: BUT SPEAK THE WORD ONLY, AND MY SERVANT SHALL BE HEALED.—St. Matt. viii. 8.

OUR LORD is entering into the town of Capernaum; there meets Him a centurion; one who is in office in the army, a man in authority. This centurion beseeches JESUS not for himself, nor for any relation, not even for an equal in rank, but for his servant, who is lying sick of a palsy, grievously tormented; he describes the disease, but he asks nothing; he does not say, Come and heal him; nor does he request the cure on the spot. JESUS says, "I will come and heal him." But this centurion, knowing to Whom he speaks, says, LORD, I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. In those few simple words what humility, what faith are shewn!

In this history, how striking is the character of the centurion. First, his acknowledgment of JESUS as GOD; then, his tender regard for his servant; his simple statement of his servant's need, without asking for the relief which his faith told him his Saviour would grant; his declaration of unworthiness of having the LORD of heaven and earth under his roof; — a declaration which he could not have made, had he not borne in his heart Him, Whom he feared to ask into his house; and his earnest statement of his belief that He Whom he besought had power to effect the cure by His word alone.

I see in this history much and affecting instruction, on which I would profitably meditate. Know ye not that ye are the temples of GOD? so saith the apostle. I know that at baptism I was washed and cleansed, and made fit to be the temple of the HOLY GHOST. But in examining myself, I find that I have in many ways defiled that holy temple; and I can no longer expect that GOD will dwell in me. I must, however, sift well and see which of my senses — those servants which, like the centurion's, I make obedient to my will — which of these have become palsied by sin, and then I must go

straight to Jesus. I must deplore the ruined and desolate state of that house, even my soul, which He had deigned once to make His own, and I must confess,—Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.

My soul, it is in the sacrament of the holy Body and the precious Blood of thy Lord, that He especially approaches thee. If thou draw near in humility and faith, He will give Himself to thee, and in receiving those precious mysteries thou wilt receive Him into thyself. How canst thou but mourn at the desolate and ruined state of the habitation in which thy God vouchsafes to abide! Resolve to omit no means and opportunity not only of purifying and cleansing thy house, but of enriching and ornamenting it to the best of thy poor ability. When thou hast done all, thou wilt have to exclaim in deep humility, O Lord, I am not worthy, I am not fit that Thou shouldest come under my roof, for it is desolate and ruined; nor hast Thou a fitting place to lay Thy head. But as Thou didst vouchsafe to lie in the cavern and manger of brute cattle; as Thou didst not disdain to be entertained in the house of Simon the leper; as

Thou didst not disdain that harlot who, like me, was a sinner, coming to Thee and touching Thee; as Thou abhorredst not her polluted and loathsome mouth; nor the thief on the cross confessing Thee; so me, too, ruined, wretched, and excessive sinner, deign to receive to the touch and partaking of the immaculate, supernatural, life-giving, and saving mysteries of Thy all-holy Body and Thy precious Blood.

Go on, my soul, in humility, and it is promised that according to thy faith so will it be done unto thee.

Friday

AFTER THIRD SUNDAY.

WHEN JESUS HEARD IT, HE MARVELLED, AND SAID TO THEM THAT FOLLOWED: VERILY I SAY UNTO YOU, I HAVE NOT FOUND SO GREAT FAITH, NO, NOT IN ISRAEL.—St. Matthew, viii. 10.

WE may see the blessed JESUS listening to the words of the centurion; and then lifting up His hands, as in astonishment, He turns to those who are following Him, and points out to them the circumstance at which they ought to wonder; that a man, not of Israel, should possess faith, surpassing any that He had met with among the chosen people. Now, let me meditate upon the faith of the centurion which called forth such expressions of commendation from our blessed Saviour. He was a Gentile; one not brought up in the belief of One only and true GOD; he had not all his life been waiting for, and expecting the Messiah; his faith came we know not how; the wind bloweth

where it listeth, and we hear the sound thereof, but we cannot tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth, so is every one that is born of the Spirit. The centurion possessed that higher order of faith which is made of a concurrence of the will and the understanding; he believed that in CHRIST he saw GOD All-powerful, All-merciful, All-knowing; and he acted upon that belief.

How did he act, and in what did he differ from others who also possessed it? Andrew believed, but it was after John had said, "Behold the Lamb of GOD:" Peter believed, but it was at the preaching of Andrew. Jairus also believed, but in making his request, he said "Come quickly." Martha and Mary said, "LORD, if Thou hadst been here my brother had not died." In all these instances the suppliants demanded that something might be done, in order to effect the cure which they desired; they wished to witness the act from which the miracle should result. The faith of the centurion went beyond this; he set no limits to the power of the LORD, and demanded that He should speak the word only, thereby confessing his belief in the omnipotence of Him who stood before him "without comeliness," "and in the form of a servant."

The pattern of faith which this good soldier sets me is to be followed precisely, only such situations requiring alteration as the differing circumstances point out. I cannot come to JESUS direct and make my requests to Him as He stands before me; but I must believe and act up to all the precepts and commandments He has left. "Examine yourselves, brethren, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves." "Know ye not your own selves that JESUS CHRIST is in you except ye be reprobates." If JESUS CHRIST dwells in me, I am a true believer; if He does not, I am a reprobate, having no faith. How shall I know whether CHRIST dwells in me? St. Paul says, "If CHRIST be in you the body is dead, by reason of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness." This then is the mark of a true believer, a mortified body and a quickened spirit. This explains enough, and by this we see what we have to trust to. A wicked man does in vain hope to be saved by his faith, for his faith is but equivocal to being dead: for again I may use the words of St. Paul, "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in GOD, might be careful to maintain good

works." For such and such only, in the great scrutiny of faith in the day of doom, shall have their portion in the bosom of the faithful Abraham.

My soul, acknowledge the holy Jesus to be thy Lord and Master, beseech Him to make thee a servant and disciple of His holy doctrine and discipline. Love to sit at His feet, and draw in the sweetness of His holy sermons. Be thou shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, with a peaceable and docile disposition. Take great boldness in the confession of His Name, and remember that His holy Name is called upon thee, and so behave thyself as to give no scandal to others, or cause the gospel to be evil spoken of. Pray for this, saying, "Thy holy faith, O Lord, once delivered to the saints, I believe; help Thou my unbelief, and vouchsafe to me the breath of salutary grace. In the holy Catholic Church, to have my calling, and holiness, and portion, and a fellowship in her holy rites, and prayers, fastings, and groans, vigils, tears, and sufferings; for assurance of remission of sins, and hope of resurrection, and translation to life eternal. *Amen.*"

Saturday

AFTER THIRD SUNDAY.

GO THY WAY; AND AS THOU HAST BELIEVED, SO BE IT DONE UNTO THEE. AND HIS SERVANT WAS HEALED IN THE SELF-SAME HOUR.—St. Matthew, viii. 13.

THE centurion's servant was, during this time, at the house, languishing under the disease which tormented him so grievously; great must have been his astonishment and that of the bystanders, when he was suddenly and completely cured. They probably knew of the centurion's errand to our LORD, but whether they had the faith which would lead them to expect the success of his mission is not revealed to us. Probably the servant was a Gentile, and had no knowledge of the Saviour Who did such great things for him. His master's faith procured for him that, which will be remembered in all ages, and wherever the Name of JESUS is preached; and his gratitude to JESUS must have risen through that which he owed to the person by

whose intercession his disease was taken away. I may consider, in this part of the history of the centurion, the benefit which faith, possessed by one person, may bestow upon those with whom he is connected. It is one of the privileges of faith to be allowed to intercede for those in whom we feel an interest; for those who are near and dear to us; and for those who are in any distress of mind, body, or estate. To be permitted to intercede for others is a great boon; to feel that the prayer may prevail, is one of those blessed, soul-stirring convictions, which, amid all our sorrow for misdeeds, shortcomings, and backslidings, comes as the most touching proof of our Saviour's mercy and long-suffering. The benefit of intercessory prayer was shewn to Abraham; even he, the pattern of faithfulness, confessed that he, sinful dust and ashes, could hardly dare to approach the Lord. When he *did* intercede for Sodom, the Lord heard his prayer. So the centurion came to Jesus confessing his unworthiness that He should come under his roof; he interceded for his servant and his prayer was heard; for as he believed, so was it done to him, and his servant was healed in the self-same hour.

Seeing then that the effectual fervent prayer of the righteous man availeth much, how ought I, in the first place, to endeavour to arrive at that height of faith which will make such intercession effectual, and how ought I, in the next place, to endeavour rightly to exercise the blessed privilege. When I consider the worth of a soul, and what price it took to redeem that soul from destruction; when I look around at the vast mass of sin, of misery, of death, and of helplessness by which we are surrounded, it seems as if the whole life ought to be one long prayer for the various forms of want, which all our fellow mortals present. In some senses life may be made one long intercessory prayer, for God knows our hearts, and will not disregard the movements of pity which must arise in witnessing the passing sights of woe, which we meet at every turn in a crowded city. One tear shed in godly sorrow over the misery of a fellow creature may work out untold miracles in washing out that wretchedness. Above all, my soul, let thy faith be active for those who, from being placed near thee, are more especially to be considered thy neighbours. Ask not once, nor

coldly, but pray without ceasing; be importunate, knock, and call, and wait, and watch, and go on interceding for all who require thy prayers, being assured as thou hast believed, so will it be done unto thee.

Fourth Sunday after Epiphany.

LET EVERY SOUL BE SUBJECT UNTO THE HIGHER POWERS. FOR THERE IS NO POWER BUT OF GOD: THE POWERS THAT BE ARE ORDAINED OF GOD.—Romans, xiii. 1.

WHEN I try to look into the mystery of my creation, I find that I have received my being for a twofold purpose; to serve and to reign; to be in subjection and to have dominion. I am born to two estates—a servant's and a king's. But of these two, one is mine absolutely, the other mine upon conditions. To a service I am bound by an absolute decree, whether I render it to Him to Whom it is due or to some other. A kingdom is also mine, but only if I serve GOD. Serve I must, reign I may. If I attempt to reign without serving GOD, I forfeit my appointed kingdom to His offended Majesty; but I do not cease to be a servant. By rebelling against the power above me, I become not free of all power: I do but fall into captivity to the powers below me, even to those evil powers

which do not willingly serve God, but yet are compelled to serve Him, against their will, in fetters and in torments; and having no longer any will for His service are trampled under foot of those that have. Before Adam fell, not only had he dominion over all the works of God's hands, but moreover one little outward law was enough to remind him of his subjection to his Maker. But since the transgression of that one law, the Spirit of God has been continually striving with the children of men; and in merciful compassion to their weakness, has both diminished those natural powers of theirs which they are now so inclined to abuse, and also multiplied among them the token and representatives of His own power, setting over them laws and governments and relations of authority, parents, princes, magistrates, judges, teachers, spiritual pastors and masters.

If thy delight then, O my soul, be "in thrones and sceptres;" if thou longest after glory and honour and dominion and power, seek not these things in the paths of rebellion by resisting the powers set over thee, but seek them in the way of humility by submitting to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake. The Lord of all these

things was subject unto all, that He might bestow them all on thee. Be thou subject with Him: suffer patiently with Him now, and so shalt Thou reign gloriously with Him hereafter. Fear not lest submission expose thee to the storms of oppression, to the winds of the proud and the waves of the cruel. Thou servest One Whom even the winds and the sea obey. Yea, the devils are subject unto Him. Dread nothing, therefore, but the desire of having thine own way and doing thine own pleasure. For if thou yieldest to such desire thou art in danger of exchanging the service of Christ, for that of the flesh. And if thou so despisest thy birthright, and castest thyself out of His service and protection and becomest like the swine in His sight, then will thy fierce enemies, whom thou shouldest have trodden under thy feet, have permission to enter into thee; and all thy faculties and powers, being possessed of them, will run violently down the steep place of sin into the sea of perdition, and perish in the waters of eternal death.

LORD, I am not high-minded: I have no proud looks.

I do not exercise myself in great matters: which are too high for me.

But I refrain my soul, and keep it low, like as a child that is weaned from his mother: yea, my soul is even as a weaned child.

O Israel, trust in the LORD: from this time forth for evermore.

Monday

AFTER FOURTH SUNDAY.

AND, BEHOLD, THERE AROSE A GREAT TEMPEST IN THE SEA, INSOMUCH THAT THE SHIP WAS COVERED WITH THE WAVES: BUT HE WAS ASLEEP.—St. Matt. viii. 24.

OUR LORD entered a ship with His disciples in order to shew them, after witnessing His miracles on the land, His power on the great deep.

There arose a great tempest; the winds howled and whistled; dark masses of cloud swept swiftly across the sky; the waves, too, tossed up and rolled along, tipped with white foam; the ship or small skiff was hurled about as if in play by the wild waters, now resting on the top of a wave, now diving down as into a gulf, now struck on one side, and now completely covered by the dashing and foaming waters. Amid all this noise and confusion of the elements, where was Jesus? There is He, the model of innocence and purity, the Prince of Peace, asleep! How

does that little sentence come home to us as an image of the rest, the calm, the God-like peace and security, which rests around the holy JESUS! Wherever He is, rage the tempest never so horribly, there is peace and rest.

This narrative may be taken in two ways. I will consider first, the ship as a type of the Church, in which JESUS abides continually, and also with those His appointed ministers, the successors of His apostles. This ship, even His Church, is beset with dangers; a mighty tempest is stirred up around it, the waters roar and are troubled, the mountains shake with the swelling thereof, mighty waves come sweeping up, dashing over the vessel; and when they clear away we find some have been swept off, not able to withstand the trouble of the water, and are carried from the ship, even our Church, and we see them no more: others are fearfully shaken and bruised by the rolling of the troubled vessel, but they cling to some bulwark; they remember Who is in the ship, and they continue firmly clinging to her, knowing that if they quit her or suffer themselves to be drawn from her, they quit Him, their beloved LORD and Master. He is only asleep, He is still mighty to save, His

presence alone is a safeguard, and He will awake ere we perish. The LORD of hosts is with us, the GOD of Jacob is our refuge.

I may consider this history in a more particular and individual way; the ship, being a type of human life,—all the troubles, toils, cares, anxieties thereof, all our own particular sins, errors, failings, and shortcomings, being the tempest which rises up around us. Tossed about with doubts and difficulties, with perils of the body, and the dangers of the soul, there seems no help for us; we must perish. Recollect that JESUS is there; He is asleep, but still He is there; and the contemplation of His calm, blissful slumbers, ought to bring calm and peace to us. Look on Him, and be at peace. He careth for us; by Him all the hairs of our head are numbered. But still we must cry unto Him and make our humble petition, saying, "Let not the waterflood overflow me, neither let the deep swallow me up, and let not the pit shut her mouth upon me. Hear me, O LORD, for Thy loving-kindness is good; turn unto me according to the multitude of Thy tender mercies, and hide not Thy face from Thy servant, for I am in trouble; hear me speedily." And He *will* hear

thee, poor soul, and will lead thee forth beside still waters.

My soul, when thou fearest that the waters are coming in to thee, get thee to JESUS; He will not cast thee off for ever, but will arise and have mercy upon thee, for He is thy hope and strength, a very present help in trouble.

The 29th Psalm is a beautiful illustration of this miracle of our LORD'S; it begins with a description of the terrors of a tempest; it ends with assurances of confidence and peace.

Tuesday

AFTER FOURTH SUNDAY.

LORD, SAVE US: WE PERISH. AND HE SAITH UNTO THEM, WHY ARE YE FEARFUL, O YE OF LITTLE FAITH? THEN HE AROSE, AND REBUKED THE WINDS AND THE SEA; AND THERE WAS A GREAT CALM.—St. Matthew, viii. 25, 26.

THE disciples became so terrified by the tempest, that they lost all command over themselves; they went to JESUS, and hastily awaked Him, saying, "LORD save us: we perish." They had forgotten all His mighty works; all those miracles, which none but GOD could have wrought; and they had not faith to realize that though as man He lay sleeping before them, yet the Deity is ever awake, and ready to assist those who have faith to be saved. JESUS rebuked this want of courage, saying, "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" as if He had said: 'Why, remembering all I have done, do ye fear any danger when I am with you, ye whose faith cannot realize who I am?' but He arose, and

rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. In the beginning God gathered the waters together, and called them seas; and God made the firmament. Who but their Creator could command the wind and the seas, and bring them into obedience to His word? He commandeth and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof; and again, He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. The faith of the disciples was little, or they could not have feared; even after this display of His omnipotence, although they believed in Him, yet afterwards "they all forsook Him and fled." Oh! miserable state of weak and fallen man, to be thus easily led away from the Lord God!

I will pursue the image of the Church, set forth in this ship, tossed about. I will consider the numerous perils with which she is encompassed; "wild thoughts within, bad men without; all evil spirits round about;" which in truth form a fearful tempest, and which, without the protecting power of the Most High, must assuredly overwhelm her. We must stand fast in the faith; we must call unto the Lord, "Save us, we perish;" not in doubt, lest our ship, even

the Church, should go to pieces, but lest we, her weak children, should be separated from her. If we can but abide firm while she is tossed in this world, we shall find that the mercy of our God will have commanded the winds and the sea, and there will be a great calm. Then will our Church be a glorious Church, and we shall be glad and rejoice, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and the bride will have made herself ready.

In the more particular application of this, I may see myself in the sea of troubles of this world, and tossed about with a tempest of cares, anxieties, doubts, and difficulties, but I prefer to consider the storm as that arising within myself; my sins, my negligences and ignorances toss me to and fro; even when all gross sins are overcome, the constantly occurring little specks and blemishes which arise, make me doubt whether God's mercy *can* extend to me. O ye of little faith! do you forget that your Saviour is nigh? that He has taken thy sins upon Him; only apply His merits to thee: feed upon Him, pray to Him, supplicate Him; say, "Lord save me: I perish;" then will He allay the storm of doubts and difficulties, and there will be a great calm.

O GOD, who knowest us to be set in the midst of so many and great dangers, that by reason of the frailty of our nature we cannot stand upright: Grant to us such strength and protection as may support us in all dangers, and carry us through all temptations: through JESUS CHRIST our LORD.

Wednesday

AFTER FOURTH SUNDAY.

THERE MET HIM TWO POSSESSED WITH DEVILS, COMING OUT OF THE TOMBS, EXCEEDING FIERCE, SO THAT NO MAN MIGHT PASS BY THAT WAY. AND, BEHOLD, THEY CRIED OUT, SAYING, WHAT HAVE WE TO DO WITH THEE, JESUS, THOU SON OF GOD? ART THOU COME HITHER TO TORMENT US BEFORE THE TIME?—St. Matthew, viii. 28, 29.

THE two miserable wretches here described must have been wandering about the country, and, both in body and mind, must have been so disordered as to be fearful to look upon; they were so fierce and vindictive that no one durst approach them; but the devils knew, as JESUS approached, that their reign was coming to an end, and they cried out to Him expressing their apprehensions, but adding their unhesitating testimony that He was JESUS, the Son of GOD.

I may here observe the awful state of those who are entirely filled with sin, who, living among the tombs, are dead to all sense of better things, and who are so fierce and determined in

their evil courses, that no man durst approach them. How inexpressibly loathsome is the description, and how horrible the thought, that such prefer living with the corrupting, offensive, and ghastly contents of tombs, even the defiling and horrible pursuits of sin! and how dreadful are the words used to the merciful and loving Saviour, Who has done, and is doing, such great things for them! "What have we to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of God?" Almost words of defiance! and uttered—horrible to think—to God! How far more dreadful does sin appear when, in addition to its own defilements, it hurls words of scorn and defiance against Him Who died, Who shed that precious blood for them, Who came to them gentle, compassionate, loving, and even to the last, willing to open His arms and receive them into His bosom. When first Jesus appears before a desperate sinner, who has never known Him, the first thoughts of conversion are agony, all the devils by whom he is possessed become doubly active to retain their prey, they think the time is not yet come, and would willingly put it off to a more convenient season. My soul, consider this hideous picture, and never allow thyself in a single, even the very

slightest, error. One such spot unremoved, may enlarge and increase, until it become an open sore, large and wide enough to admit other sins and failings, until being entirely possessed by the "legion," thou become exceeding fierce and cry out against that Saviour Who has done all to make thee pure and spotless. Set thyself in earnest to trace out one of thy deadly foes, and God will drive them out by little and little, until not sin, but Himself shall reign over thee, here in the beginning and foretaste, hereafter in everlasting bliss, to which may He, in His infinite mercy, bring me and all mine. *Amen.*

Thursday

AFTER FOURTH SUNDAY.

SO THE DEVILS BESOUGHT HIM, SAYING, IF THOU CAST US OUT, SUFFER US TO GO AWAY INTO THE HERD OF SWINE. AND HE SAID UNTO THEM, GO. AND WHEN THEY WERE COME OUT, THEY WENT INTO THE HERD OF SWINE: AND, BEHOLD, THE WHOLE HERD OF SWINE RAN VIOLENTLY DOWN A STEEP PLACE INTO THE SEA, AND PERISHED IN THE WATERS.—St. Matthew, viii. 31, 32.

I FIND it very difficult rightly to meditate upon subjects so mysterious as GOD's dealings with evil spirits; but as every passage of Holy Scripture has its deep meaning, full of holy instruction, I must not shrink from encountering these difficulties, humbly hoping that my thoughts and prayers may not be wanting in reverence, and that I may not use the Word of GOD amiss.

The devils asked to be allowed to go into the swine, thereby implying their knowledge that JESUS had the power (and was going to execute it) of sending them away from the unhappy men whom they had so long possessed. They

must have had peculiar enmity against those Gergesenes, or they would not have wished to destroy their herd of swine. By their subsequent conduct, the Gergesenes shewed that they were in a state quite prepared to yield to the assaults of the devils; they rejected the LORD of life.

Thus, I may observe, that people who are unpurified and unsheltered by any protection of good nurture,—who are unclean, like the swine,—are peculiarly fit and prepared for the entrance of all sorts of sin and evil spirits; when the devils enter into them they run onwards with unrestrained velocity down the steep places of their evil courses and corrupt pleasures, and are choked in the waters of perdition, without a hope of salvation.

Observe that JESUS commands these evil spirits absolutely as their master; they are forced to obey His word. The power of devils over us, as exemplified in this history, is very awful and shocking to think on. The power of our blessed Saviour to restrain and to send them from us, is consoling and comforting; for we must not forget that the great enemy is allowed to go to and fro

upon the earth; he is a ramping and roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. As lions are ready to spring upon their prey, and watch the opportunity of seizing them, when off their guard, and in fancied security; so the devil is ever watching us, triumphing over our errors and omissions, and ready to pounce upon us if we are not armed with the shield of faith, and are not watchful to guard our souls from his most distant approaches.

My soul, thou must not suffer thyself to be dismayed by the activity of thy great adversary; but be watchful, be sober, and withstand all approaches of the enemy, by having thy loins girt about with truth, and having on the breast-plate of righteousness, and thy feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench the fiery darts of the wicked, and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

Thus armed, and having Jesus always at thy side, through continual recollectedness and constant devotion, thou wilt triumph over all the assaults of evil men and evil spirits, and withal

wilt have a growing horror of all the deeds wrought by such wicked spirits, and so wilt more and more avoid all sight and mention of them.

ALMIGHTY God, Who seest that we have no power of ourselves to help ourselves; keep us both outwardly in our bodies, and inwardly in our souls; that we may be defended from all adversities which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Friday

AFTER FOURTH SUNDAY.

AND, BEHOLD, THE WHOLE CITY CAME OUT TO MEET JESUS: AND WHEN THEY SAW HIM, THEY BESOUGHT HIM THAT HE WOULD DEPART OUT OF THEIR COASTS.—St. Matt. viii. 34.

WHEN the swine perished in the sea, their keepers ran into the town, and spread the astonishing news of the cure of the two men, and of the destruction of their herd.

The news of the loss of their property filled the people with alarm and indignation; they went out of the city together in order to see Him who had done this great wrong (as they thought), and when they saw Him, meek and lowly as He appeared, they treated Him with no greater courtesy than to warn Him off their lands. It is said they besought Him, and as they knew something of His power, they might have felt a dread of Him, and therefore begged of Him in civil words not to stay with them any longer;

they thought of their lost herd, and they dared His power, rather than run any risk to their property.

The Gergesenes must have known the state of the two men possessed by the devils; they must have been the very people who feared to approach them because of their exceeding ferocity; they must have been aware of the miracle which JESUS wrought in casting out the devils; and most probably the men themselves had not left JESUS, when the whole city came out to meet Him; besides which, it is very improbable but that they must have heard of the other miracles wrought by our blessed LORD before He visited their coasts.

With all this fresh in their minds, it would be very marvellous that when they came to Him, they should not have been awe-struck and convinced of His divinity, by the meek majesty of His demeanour, had they not been blinded by the love of their possessions, and enraged by the loss they had incurred. How, after considering this history, does that saying of our Blessed LORD's come home to me: "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of GOD!" It is a fearful warning of the danger of

worldly possessions, when a herd of swine could entirely turn away the eyes from discovering a Saviour, even in the midst of His mighty works; and to all, even to those who are working to gain their daily bread, it is a lesson not to set the mind too exclusively on any temporal employment, lest, when the Saviour is nigh to us, we know Him not, and beseech Him to depart from us.

The only way to exclude too great carefulness of worldly things, is to offer all to God: whether we eat, or whether we drink, or whatsoever we do, to do all to His glory; for whatever we do not give to God, will soon be seized by the devil; and we cannot serve two masters.

O blessed Saviour, grant that I may never be so occupied by worldly affairs, as to forget Thee, or to beg Thee to depart from me. Let neither riches nor honour, nor fame, nor any worldly advantage, draw me from my allegiance to Thee.

I cling to Thee, blessed, loving Lord, and I beseech Thee to shield me from all assaults of the devil, and make me to continue Thine, not only by adoption, but by choice, by love unfeigned, and ardent, and undiminishing, unto my life's end. *Amen.*

MY soul truly waiteth still upon God: for of Him cometh my salvation.

He verily is my strength and my salvation: He is my defence, so that I shall not greatly fall.

How long will ye imagine mischief against every man: ye shall be slain all the sort of you; yea, as a tottering wall shall ye be, and like a broken hedge.

Their device is only how to put him out whom God will exalt: their delight is in lies; they give good words with their mouth, but curse with their heart.

Nevertheless, my soul, wait thou still upon God: for my hope is in Him.

He truly is my strength and my salvation: He is my defence, so that I shall not fall.

In God is my health, and my glory: the rock of my might, and in God is my trust.

O put your trust in Him alway, ye people: pour out your hearts before Him, for God is our hope.

As for the children of men, they are but vanity: the children of men are deceitful upon the weights, they are altogether lighter than vanity itself.

O trust not in wrong and robbery, give not yourselves unto vanity: if riches increase, set not your heart upon them.

God spake once, and twice I have also heard the same: that power belongeth unto God.

And that Thou, Lord, art merciful: for Thou rewardest every man according to his work.

Saturday

AFTER FOURTH SUNDAY.

CAST ME NOT AWAY FROM THY PRESENCE.—Psalm li. 11.

I HAVE considered of late the several states and conditions of men who were benefited by the miracles of our blessed LORD; and I would pause, and look back on them, as the whole view seems to convey an important lesson.

In the miracle of turning water into wine, our LORD ministered, if I may so speak, to household necessities. Amid other and higher meanings, on the face of that miracle was a domestic want and a liberal supply.

In the leper I saw great bodily infirmity removed; in the centurion, the answer to prayer for the healing of those in whom we take an interest; in calming the tempest, we see the care over those who walk abroad; in the cure of the two possessed with devils, we see the power over evil spirits, and over all the gross and vile sins of which our nature is capable. In all these we

see only JESUS, the First and the Last, He Who speaks in righteousness, mighty to save; He it is Who keeps for us the good wine until the last; He it is Who does to us according to our faith; He Who rebukes the winds, and the sea, and there is a great calm; He it is Who quells the fierceness of evil spirits, and sends them to swift destruction. JESUS is all; JESUS is everywhere; JESUS is everything; He it is Who says, "If a man love Me, he will keep My words, and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

Love Thee, O blessed JESUS! Yea, what a happy, glorious privilege to know Thee and to love Thee; but alas! I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come under my roof: how can I hope to be clean enough, pure enough for Thee to abide in me?

Let me consider how I can keep myself always with JESUS, that He may be ever with me. I must meditate upon all that He has done for His Church: upon His incarnation, His nativity, His circumcision; upon His baptism, His fasting, His temptation; upon His agony and bloody sweat, His cross and passion, His precious death and burial; upon His resurrection and ascension;

and upon His session at the right hand of God. These thoughts ought to enkindle a great love and a great zeal; and then must I turn in my thoughts upon myself, and thoroughly examine into all sins, faults, tendencies; into all thoughts, words, actions; especially being careful to mark those besetting sins, which in daily examination I find to be of frequent recurrence; *(here be particular;)* renounce all sins; be particular about purity of intention; and then on thy knees, O my soul, beseech that thy merciful Saviour will blot out from His remembrance all thy sins, negligences and ignorances, that He will speak the word, and heal thee. Ever live in constant communion with thy blessed Lord, by the frequent and devout reception of the sacrament of His body and blood. But for cultivating the sense of His continual presence with thee, thou must be ever clinging to His cross, that every event of thy life may be sanctified by the immediate contact and constant remembrance of His cross, passion, and death; to which end, let no part of the day pass without bringing to mind some point of His life or death; in all thy joys go to Jesus, He is the truest sympathizer; in all thy sorrows spread them before Jesus, He will relieve

them; in thy sickness He is thy physician; in the tempests and troubles of thy life, He only can say, "Peace, be still!" in all assaults of the world, the flesh, and the devil, He, and He only can command them to leave thee.

All praise, honour, and glory be to Thee, holy and eternal JESUS. I adore Thee, O blessed Redeemer, eternal GOD, the Light of the Gentiles, and the Glory of Thy people Israel.

Teach me to live wholly for my Saviour JESUS, and to be ready to die for JESUS, and to be comformable to His life and sufferings, and to be united to Him by inseparable union, and to own no passions but what may be servants to JESUS and disciples of His institution.

O sweetest Saviour, clothe my soul with Thy holy robe; hide my sins in Thy wounds, and bury them in Thy grave; and let me rise in the life of grace, and abide and grow in it till I arrive at the kingdom of glory. *Amen.*

Fifth Sunday after Epiphany.

PUT ON THEREFORE, HOLY AND BELOVED, BOWELS OF MERCIES.—Colossians, iii. 12.

I MAY imagine myself standing before the holy Paul, receiving his instructions, and listening with devout reverence to the words of the Holy Spirit of GOD, which issue from his lips.

He calls me "holy and beloved." "Holy," because, being elected a member of CHRIST'S mystical body by baptism, I have the righteousness of CHRIST imputed to me; unholy in myself, I am accounted holy because of that meritorious sacrifice of the cross. O blessed JESUS, may this great love, this enormous benefit conferred on me, stir me up to make the most strenuous exertions, to keep alive the grace given, and to grow in it; and to increase in the knowledge and love of Thee until Thou shalt call me unto Thyself, where alone I can receive the perfection of holiness, and enjoy the perfection of bliss.

The apostle calls me "beloved;" me, a poor

weak creature, who possess no quality for which I can be loved by so holy a servant of the LORD. Here, the true love of a Christian comes out; all who are members of CHRIST's body are "beloved," unless they be reprobate. Here, again, do I mark my own Christian deficiency. I cannot now call all CHRIST's servants beloved. I should be insincere and unreal were I to do so; but, LORD, Thou knowest; Thou canst accomplish; give me the grace of true Christian love, and make me to regard all Thy faithful ones as beloved brethren, fellow members and fellow heirs of Thy body, and of Thy promises.

I further hear St. Paul command me to put on bowels of mercies; mercy is compassion, which comes forth in some act of kindness to the person or thing compassionated. This merciful action, I can readily perceive, may not always proceed from right motives; it may not spring from the feeling of the heart; it may not be actuated by love to the brethren. I am here commanded to put on *bowels* of mercies; the mercy is to spring from the interior, it is to pervade every action, it is to be the channel for conveying life and nourishment to the soul, as do the bowels to the body; and see how, if the

bowels of mercies are put on, the other qualities mentioned grow and increase, as the nourishment flowing through them. Kindness will issue from the same source; humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; and so going onward, and upward, until we reach CHRIST, the Source of life, Whose example we are to follow.

My soul, ponder these things. Thy most earnest endeavours are required to gain the virtues which relate to the love of thy neighbour, because more restraint, more self-denial, is required in them than in thy service to GOD. In the one, imperfection meets its fellow; in the other, the weak creature soars up, hoping to meet and to be assisted by the Almighty and All-loving Creator. O LORD, heavenly Father, teach me to lean on Thy heavenly grace, and defend me evermore by Thy mighty power, through JESUS CHRIST our LORD. *Amen.*

Monday

AFTER FIFTH SUNDAY.

FORBEARING ONE ANOTHER, AND FORGIVING ONE ANOTHER.—Colossians iii. 13.

I STILL stand before my instructor, St. Paul; he puts upon me the light yoke and easy burden of CHRIST, by commanding forgiveness of injuries. While our teacher is giving us such instructions as we are willing to follow, we listen with eagerness, and make many resolutions to endeavour to act up to his teaching; but when he touches upon points which clash with our preconceived notions, our personal comfort, or our cherished defects, we start aside and find numberless excuses, why, in *our* particular circumstances, such observances are impossible or inexpedient. This shuffling aside is very likely to arise in the question of bearing and forbearing, when any one has injured us by word or deed; if the injury does not effect any personal feeling, and is a thing which affords us no pride or

pleasure, we are willing to make a merit of bearing and forbearing. But if we have a "quarrel against any;" if we *feel* the aggression, and are likely to suffer from it, do we then forbear from visiting the offender with punishment, and do we forgive him heartily, as if we had no quarrel against him? I fear that my case could not be so. I fear that if a person had displeased me, I should not feel so concerned as I ought, if anything were to happen to cause that person annoyance or uneasiness, although I might be above inflicting pain or punishment myself. It may be in this case, as in others, that when the offence is a great one, it is easier to forbear and forgive, than in the many little petty daily annoyances, which are sure to arise in intercourse with our fellow-creatures; it is therefore in small things that I must begin by endeavouring to forbear and forgive, and then perchance if my enemy trespass against me seventy times seven, I may learn to forget the annoyances, pardon the injury, and love and pray for the offender. But the reason why I am to forgive and forbear is, because Christ forgave me. I have to encounter occasional and slight annoyances, and those from persons who for the most part owe me no service

or gratitude. But CHRIST has once forgiven and blotted out all my sins, and He has since crowned me with mercies and loving-kindness, while I have gone on sinning and trespassing and forgetting Him who has done so great things for me.

Think, O my soul, of all thy misdeeds, and of the continually increasing flow of comforts and mercies which thy GOD has poured upon thee. Think of thy creation, preservation, redemption, and all the blessings of this life; think upon the means of grace and the hope of glory. Art thou not astonished at the long-suffering and forbearance of thy LORD, and canst thou, after this view, think of exacting from thy fellow-servant the one hundred pence which he owes thee; of a truth thy heavenly Father might well claim ten thousand talents.

Have mercy, LORD! and what shall Thy servant say? Have patience with me! nay, forgive me but the whole debt, I beseech Thee. LORD, I have nothing at all to pay; have mercy on me. And as Thou hast forgiven me, grant that I likewise may forgive, and give, and love as becomes Thy servant.

Tuesday

AFTER FIFTH SUNDAY.

AND LET THE PEACE OF GOD RULE IN YOUR HEARTS.—Colossians, iii. 15.

HOW does the "peace of GOD" come as a gracious rain from heaven, when we turn from the toils, and cares, and sorrows, and mortifications, the disputings and discords of the world, and bring our souls into communion with GOD! The peace of GOD passeth all understanding; it is as inexpressible as mysterious, coming into our hearts and smoothing down all the roughnesses occasioned by contact with the world, and diffusing a joy, a comfort, a happiness, which no other joy or happiness can equal, and which is truly past understanding.

We pass from a noisy, dusty thoroughfare, where men are jostling and pushing one another, where the wicked and the miserable and the busy are mingled up in one mass, and we enter a church; in an instant we lose the noise of the

crowded mart; we are in a holy stillness; every look tells that God is in all thoughts; there is quiet in the dim, tinted light; there is calm in the noiseless motions of the worshippers; there is joy in the solemn words of the priest, and the devout responses of the people. This is an emblem of the peace of God; in a manner it *is* that very peace itself; and oh! if I might have that holy peace to reign in my heart, how would I gladly give up all the sway that the world holds over me!

The peace of God can only reign in hearts where the world has no dominion; in hearts that are kind, humble, meek, long-suffering, full of forbearance, of forgiveness, and of charity. But I cannot separate myself from my worldly duties, from worldly ties. No, but I *can* perform my worldly duties and live above them with God, in obedience to His blessed laws, filled with His holy peace; I *can* make all worldly ties subservient to my duty to God; I may love God in them, I may serve God by them, and I may thus make even worldly ties means of possessing the peace, which is not given by man, neither can it be taken away by man.

O my soul, let this everlasting peace reign in

thee. Cling to thy Saviour CHRIST, the Prince of Peace. Suffer Him not to depart from thee; but, living with Him above all worldly things, thou canst take thy share of employments, of cares, and of troubles; but still thou need make this no abiding city; but live in union with GOD, and possess the peace of GOD, which passeth all understanding, and which will keep thee in the knowledge and love of GOD, and of His Son JESUS CHRIST our LORD.

Wednesday

AFTER FIFTH SUNDAY.

LET THE WORD OF CHRIST DWELL IN YOU RICHLY IN ALL WISDOM; TEACHING AND ADMONISHING ONE ANOTHER IN PSALMS AND HYMNS AND SPIRITUAL SONGS.—Colossians, iii. 16.

ST. PAUL here gives me some directions on a point on which rules and regulations are most necessary; namely, my intercourse with others. I find that, in mixing with others in general intercourse, I am always inclined to throw off all recollection of GOD, and of that solemn account I shall have to give at the last day for every idle word; I forget Whom I serve, or, rather I am not willing to admit that my conversation and behaviour may have an effect not only on the conduct, but on the religion of others. Now, in joining with others in any kind of intercourse, I have a duty to perform; I ought to shew constantly that Christ dwells in me; that my religion has an effect not in moving

my lips only, but in regulating my every movement. To doubt the benefit of such conduct on others, is not want of humility, but want of faith; and though I must not make an ostentatious display of religion, neither must I use an uncandid reserve, when there is an opportunity of teaching and being taught, of admonishing and receiving reproof, and of joining with God's servants in prayer and praise, for all the wants we have in common, and for all the benefits we enjoy in common. May our Lord Jesus Christ thus dwell richly in me, and may I shew forth His praise and glory among the faithful, and in the congregation.

Consider, O my soul, how thou canst best overcome thy reluctance to making thyself useful, by shewing thy religion in thy conversation and conduct; how thou canst avoid ostentation on the one hand and cowardice on the other. Whenever thou enterest into conversation, or meetest a friend, lift up thy heart to God, and utter mentally an ejaculation, beseeching Him to bless to His own glory and service, and for the good of thyself and of thine acquaintance, this thy intercourse or conversation. Never omit it; let it be as much a matter of necessity with

thee as the conversation itself, and doubt not that God will abundantly bless thy earnest endeavour, both for thy own good and for that of thy neighbour.

O Lord God! behold I cannot speak, for I am a child. I am of a slow tongue; but Thou Who hast made man's mouth, and Who maketh the dumb to speak, be Thou with my mouth, I humbly beseech Thee, and teach me what Thou wouldst have me say. Send down Thy Holy Spirit and lay the live coals of Thy discipline upon my tongue; which will take away all mine iniquity and purge my sin. Behold me, Lord; send me; and dedicate my mouth to Thy service and to Thy glory. *Amen.*

Thursday

AFTER FIFTH SUNDAY.

AND WHATSOEVER YE DO IN WORD OR DEED, DO ALL IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS.—Colossians, iii. 17.

I AM a servant of JESUS CHRIST; behold then, as the eyes of servants look unto the hands of their master, and as the hand of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress, even so do my eyes wait upon the LORD my GOD. Servants are to be faithful in all things, and they ought not only to endeavour to please their masters by their necessary service, but also in their general conduct, and have their master's interest and honour always before them. If this is the duty of servants as regards their masters according to the flesh, how much more ought I to be constant and urgent in my endeavours to serve and to glorify my heavenly Master, to Whom I owe all that I am, all that I have? If we could but realize the fact, that the only want a Christian has, is ever to have JESUS present with him in heart and

mind, how would this constant sense of the Divine Presence purify our thoughts, correct our words, and amend our actions? And truly JESUS *is* in us, except we be reprobate; how unaccountably dull am I then, in ever for an instant forgetting this blessed fact! And how senseless in so constantly losing sight of the duty and service I owe to my Divine Master, when every hour of the day is marked by the remembrance of some work of redeeming love performed by our dearest Saviour: though every year brings its record of all that He did and suffered for us, yet how backward am I to call these blessed facts to my mind, and to do all in the name of the LORD JESUS. O my soul, stir up in thee a strong will and resolution to do more for the glory of the blessed Saviour. Whether thou eatest or drinkest, or whatever thou doest, do all to His glory; and if it be for that glory to suffer tribulations also, receive these joyfully, rejoicing also if thou be worthy to suffer shame for His Name.

Friday

AFTER FIFTH SUNDAY.

BUT WHILE MEN SLEPT, HIS ENEMY CAME AND SOWED TARES AMONG THE WHEAT, AND WENT HIS WAY.—
St. Matthew, xiii. 25.

THE enemy, that is, the devil, took advantage of men being asleep to sow the tares; this, we are told by our blessed Saviour Himself, is what happened, when after the Almighty Creator had pronounced all that He had made, "very good," the devil came into the flourishing field and sowed the seed of all evil and wickedness. Now, I may suppose, that if this took place in the world at large, the same will also take place in the little world of each heart; and for this reason our blessed LORD and Master spoke the parable, that each one, both among His own immediate disciples, and the vast multitude who surrounded Him as He taught on the sea shore, might apply it to his own heart.

Do thou, also, O my soul, apply it to thyself;

remember how that thine adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour; therefore must thou be sober, be vigilant — watch and pray lest thou enter into temptation. Watch, lest if the enemy find thee sleeping, he may sow every kind of evil disposition in thine heart. Watch; and, that thou mayest watch effectually, thou must pray fervently; watch unto prayer; be always on the look-out for the approach of the enemy, — thou mayest discern his approach by detecting the *beginnings* of evil thoughts and bad habits. If after these warnings, which will be often repeated, thou sleepest, then will the enemy come and sow the tares in thy soul. O, the fearful awakening from such slumbers! thou wilt have sinned away grace; thou wilt have given place to the devil; thou wilt have kindled the anger of thy Maker, and provoked the wrath of thy Judge.

Let it not be so, but watch and pray that the good seed sown in thy heart may, by the blessing of the Holy Spirit of grace, be increased and multiplied in thee, bringing forth fruit, which, when the angelical reapers come down, may be gathered into the everlasting storehouse on high,

there to live and flourish under the brightness shed abroad by the Divine Husbandman, to Whom thou owest both the seed, and the increase, and the perfection.

Saturday

AFTER FIFTH SUNDAY.

GATHER YE TOGETHER FIRST THE TARES, AND BIND THEM IN BUNDLES TO BURN THEM: BUT GATHER THE WHEAT INTO MY BARN.—St. Matt. xiii. 30.

THE tares and the wheat, the wicked and the righteous, are to grow on together, until the great harvest day. The tares may appear to have profited by the fertility of soil, and may seem to return the bounties bestowed upon them, by a great luxuriance of growth; so, the unrighteous may appear to flourish, even like a green bay tree; he may go on, and to the carnal eye, appear more prosperous in the world than the righteous; but the harvest time approaches; the voice of the archangel is heard; the trump of GOD resounds through the air; the angels appear; and after the terrible and just Judge has passed His sentence, the tares, even the unhappy wicked ones, are gathered together, and thrust by the unpitying angels into the lake

that burneth with fire and brimstone; "there," says our Blessed Lord, "shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth;" and the smoke of their torment shall rise up for ever and ever.

But the wheat, those righteous ones, who have kept themselves pure and unspotted from the world, and have walked in all the commandments of the Lord blameless; what will become of them? They are gathered up and placed in the Almighty Father's barn, "and then," says our Lord, "shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of the Father." They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars, for ever and ever.

How, after this view, canst thou long remain idle, O my soul! Soon shalt thou hear that fearful call to judgment; and then wilt thou be bundled up with the tares to be burnt? See the wide hell-mouth gaping; the pointed flames darting up as if eager to catch their victims; see the horrid glare; and listen to dismal sounds of woe, uttered by souls in despair and dismay at the thought of an eternity of torture. O save thyself from that hour, and awaken to the reality that such an hour must come, if thou do not

rouse and bestir thyself; think of the bliss of heaven, of the beautiful vision of the everlasting rest and peace in a place of verdure and of dew; and see the vast gain to thee, if even thou hast to sacrifice *all* rest and peace in this world, if thou attain eternal happiness in those heavenly mansions prepared by our Heavenly Father for those who love Him.

LORD, who shall dwell in Thy tabernacle: or who shall rest upon Thy holy hill?

Even he that leadeth an uncorrupt life: and doeth the thing which is right, and speaketh the truth from his heart.

He that hath used no deceit in his tongue, nor done evil to his neighbour: and hath not slandered his neighbour.

He that setteth not by himself, but is lowly in his own eyes: and maketh much of them that fear the LORD.

He that sweareth unto his neighbour, and disappointeth him not: though it were to his own hindrance.

He that hath not given his money upon usury: nor taken reward against the innocent.

Whoso doeth these things: shall never fall.

Sixth Sunday after Epiphany.

BEHOLD, WHAT MANNER OF LOVE THE FATHER HATH BESTOWED UPON US, THAT WE SHOULD BE CALLED THE SONS OF GOD.—1 John, iii. 1.

IN whatever way we look upon ourselves, we must wonder at the prodigious long-suffering and love of GOD towards us; whether as members of a fallen race, as corrupt by inheritance, or as reprobate and inclined by every disposition to sin, in ourselves. Yet such is the love of our Heavenly Father towards us, that, overlooking and blotting out the handwriting of our offences that is against us, He has bestowed upon us His Almighty love, by which He has graciously called us to be His children,—children by adoption; whereby He has associated us with that His only-begotten Son, on Whom He has laid the iniquity of us all, and by Whom we are redeemed to be joint heirs with Himself.

This mighty love is to our finite capacities quite incomprehensible; it includes within itself

a scheme of mercies mingled with immovable justice, for the understanding of which we have no sense now, but we shall have hereafter, when the developements of all our Father's gracious dealings with us will be one of the joys of that blest place, where we shall know even as we are known. Seeing, then, that I am adopted to be a son of God, what manner of person ought I to be in all holiness and purity of living? I am elected and called to be a joint heir of the blessed inheritance prepared for those who love the Lord. Being an heir, it does not follow that I shall come to the inheritance; that must depend upon how I conduct myself during the time of my probation. But I would rather look, not at the reward, as the inducement to striving for the high prize, but to the exceeding love of God, Who, dwelling so high, deigns to regard such a miserable, weak creature as myself.

Consider, O my soul, thy gracious Father; regard Him with the love which thou shouldest feel towards Him to Whom thou owest all that thou hast, all that thou art; and Who has given His only Son to die, that thou mightest live. Love Him, therefore, with every sense, every faculty, with all the intensity which such a

Divine Object commands. Thou must also fear Him, as a dutiful child fears a father, with a loving fear, which avoids every occasion of offence, which studies to become acquainted with all the wishes, the commands, the slightest intimations of wishes, of the beloved parent. Thy gratitude and thy love will be increased manifold when thou feelest that with God for thy Father, thou hast also Christ for thy elder Brother. Oh that this thought, reverentially entertained, may increase my love and devotion to God, may make me cling closer to Christ, and may bring me into nearer communion with that holy, blessed and glorious Trinity, three Persons, one God, by Whom I have been created, redeemed, and regenerated.

Monday

AFTER SIXTH SUNDAY.

BUT WE KNOW THAT, WHEN HE SHALL APPEAR, WE SHALL BE LIKE HIM.—1 John, iii. 2.

WE were an image of GOD by nature, and this image, wholly, we never lost, never can lose. Whithersoever the soul shall go, such shall it ever be. Not so the likeness to GOD. It either abideth in us, if we are good; or if the soul sinneth it is miserably changed, and we become like to the beasts that perish.

Our truest, fullest likeness, was in that gift above all nature, the soul of the soul,—divine grace.

This likeness, through Adam, we lost; through CHRIST we blessedly regained. For now we are holy, not only by our new relationship to GOD through CHRIST, but by Him Who vouchsafes to be called His Gift, because He is given to us,—"His Holy Spirit Which dwelleth in us."

But we should not be like Him, if we had not

after our measure, the qualities (so to speak) of Almighty God. Consider, O my soul, the wisdom, the holiness, the power, the glory, the beauty, the love of God. How canst thou comprehend these things? truly to know them we must see Himself. The ear cannot catch them; the tongue cannot speak of them; to the inmost heart which loveth God, He reveals but some faint gleam of them. They are laid up in store for them who love Him.

And canst thou, my soul, for whom these things are in store, to whom (if thou art saved) there is reserved, according to thy measure, such fulness of the love of God, and likeness to Him; canst thou any longer be wasting that likeness, wasting bliss everlasting, amid the fleeting, fading, sickening vanities of the world?

If thou wouldst be like Him in glory, strive to be like Him here by grace. If thou wouldst have His image for ever, bear even now the image of the heavenly, after which, by His mercy, thou hast been renewed. If thou wouldst behold Him in bliss, thy heart must be made pure here, that by faith it may live to Him, Whom by the eye of the body it sees not.

O defile, then, no more that royal image, in which He formed thee; which, when sunk in the mire of sin, He came to cleanse anew by His precious blood; which He sought out so diligently by trial and suffering; which He longs to shew on high, rejoicing, to His friends and neighbours in the heavenly courts. Come to Him, not with the feet, but with the heart, and be "enlightened, that our faces be not ashamed;" looking in trust and penitence, and hope and love, to His divine countenance, desiring that His divine features may, one by one, be retraced on thee. Long to be cleansed, and He will cleanse thee; long for His in-dwelling, and He will come to thee; treasure His sacred presence when thou hast received it, and He will cleanse thee more and more; hide no part of thy sin from Him, and He will by His light brighten the dark corners, over which thou grievest; and all, sorrow or joy, dryness or refreshment, the light of His presence, or His seeming absence, shall but more kindle thy longing, and cleanse thee for that unvarying, unceasing, unspeakable presence in bliss.—"We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

O GOD, Whose blessed Son was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil, and make us the sons of God, and heirs of eternal life; Grant us, we beseech Thee, that, having this hope, we may purify ourselves, even as He is pure; that, when He shall appear again with power and great glory, we may be made like unto Him in His eternal and glorious kingdom; where with Thee, O Father, and Thee, O Holy Ghost, He liveth and reigneth, ever one God, world without end. *Amen.*

Tuesday

AFTER SIXTH SUNDAY.

FOR WE SHALL SEE HIM AS HE IS. — 1 John, iii. 2.

GOD has graciously called us to be His sons; He has given us the gift of His Holy Spirit, by which we are transformed from the image of the earthly to bear the image of the heavenly, for we shall not all sleep but we shall all be changed. The trumpet shall sound; the dead shall be raised; we shall be ushered into the presence of GOD; we shall see Him as He is. Oh! how awful are these words, "We shall see Him as He is." He Whom, while we were in the flesh, we thought on without knowing how to do so; Whom we feared, because we could form no idea of His vastness, His glory, His power; and more, Whom we feared because we obeyed Him not truly, neither served as we ought, neither loved with the intensity which all His boundless goodness demanded. Then, we shall see Him as

He is; the thought is almost unbearable; we are too weak to bear the dazzling lustre of that beautiful vision; we cannot comprehend how we shall be made like enough unto Him, so as to bear to see Him face to face.

Gracious Lord, grant that in that dread day I may be so purified, so changed, that what now appears to me to be too great, too glorious for my sinful sight, may become the perfection of bliss, the refreshment of my wearied soul, the fulfilment of all the yearnings, and seekings, and longings, that have kept my soul in so great straits, from the moment that I began to know Thee and to love Thee, until now.

But the wicked,—they must alike abide the day of his appearing. Will they see Him as He is? Yes; to them He will not appear the tender loving Father, but the terrible avenging Judge. They will see His face overcast; they will hear the words "Depart from me;" still they will see Him as He is. O my Lord, Christ my Saviour, deliver me from that dreadful hour! Save me, O Lord, or I perish! I am set in the midst of so many perils and dangers, that I cannot, of myself, stand upright; but send down Thy Holy Spirit into my heart, that I may be purified even

as He is pure, and grant that when He shall appear I may be like Him, and may enjoy the fulness of bliss, which has in itself all bliss, for through it all other things shall flow into us. I shall see Him as He is.

Wednesday

AFTER SIXTH SUNDAY.

AND EVERY MAN THAT HATH THIS HOPE IN HIM PURIFIETH HIMSELF, EVEN AS HE IS PURE.—1 John, iii. 3.

AND now, LORD, what is my hope? Truly, my hope is solely and only in Thee. My blessed privilege, is to be a son of GOD; and I look for the time when our LORD shall appear, that, by the grace of His Holy Spirit working in me, I may be found fit for the glorious change which is then to take place in me. I shall be like Him; I shall see Him as He is. All this I hope for from the free unmerited mercy of GOD. I deserve it not; no! I am poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked; but still I have this hope, and having it, I desire to purify myself, that I appear not before the LORD empty. Even in my strivings after purity, I daily see how I can do nothing of myself, how every good gift and every perfect gift cometh from above, and how, after having done all, that I could not hope to see GOD

but for the purifying influence of that one full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction, made by our blessed Lord and only Saviour upon the cross.

My soul, in thy daily endeavours after holiness and purity, how dost thou find that the difficulty lies, for the most part, in small things! When thou hast conquered thy worst passions, thy most evil propensities, one unbridled thought, one hasty word, will force in and destroy, for the time, the work that thou hast hoped was going on well in thee. Be not discouraged; thou must be contented to work on, and even if it appear to thee that thou makest no progress, still go on, especially bearing in mind that in affairs of the soul, no fault is little, no sin is small.

On looking at myself in this way, on watching myself narrowly, how precious does the redeeming blood of our dear Lord become! how utterly lost do I find myself without it! It is the blood of the cross that is in my life, my breath, my everything. It alone can save me; it alone can strengthen me; it alone can purify me.

O my gracious Lord, Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier, I am overwhelmed with love, and wonder, and gratitude, when I meditate upon

all Thou hast done for me; but I am ashamed, and sorry, and angry with myself, that my love and gratitude are not greater, are not fuller. My trust is in Thy mercy, and I have hope of Thy salvation; let me not be disappointed of my hope, but daily and hourly renew in me Thy manifold gifts of grace; purify, sanctify, enlighten me, that at Thy second coming to judge the world, I may be found acceptable in Thy sight, and being transformed by the renewing of my mind, may see Thee as Thou art, and may rest with Thee for ever in Thy heavenly mansion. This I beg for Jesus Christ's sake. *Amen.*

Thursday

AFTER SIXTH SUNDAY.

THEN IF ANY MAN SHALL SAY UNTO YOU, LO, HERE IS CHRIST, OR THERE; BELIEVE IT NOT.
— St. Matt. xxiv. 23.

I BRING before me the fearful times predicted, as forerunning the second advent of our blessed LORD upon earth, and I desire to meditate thereupon steadfastly and prayerfully, that, should I be among the quick at that awful time, I may be preserved among the number of the elect, and not fall a prey to the many lying wonders which will beset the path of every Christian in those fearful days.

There will be wars and rumours of wars; nation rising against nation; kingdoms against kingdoms; famines, pestilences, and earthquakes; but these will be but the beginnings of sorrows: the universal want of faith; the deceitful prophets; the cooling of the love of many, will be but the prelude to the abomination of deso-

lation which will stand in the holy place; then shall be a great falling away, and that man of sin shall be revealed, whose coming is after the working of satan, with all power, and lying wonders. Then shall be great tribulation, every one will be tried to the uttermost; and, except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved.

Blessed be our Lord and Saviour for His gracious promise that for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened. O glorious privilege, vouchsafed to the sons of God. What bounties are showered down upon His elect people! He, our gracious Lord, gives us a sign for our guidance in those awful days; false prophets will be working the most extraordinary miracles, such as might, if it were possible, deceive even the elect. These miracles will be performed "here" and "there," but we are to believe them not, for though our Lord came first in lowliness and obscurity, yet His second coming shall be in such glory as shall be seen everywhere, so that there will be no need to seek it hither and thither.

These tribulations and temptations are awful to think on, and well mayest thou quail, O my

soul, lest they should come upon thee. Thou must strengthen thy faith by earnest prayer, and by constant meditation on the fearful subject; thou must endeavour to lay up to thyself such a store of steadfast, enduring faith, such an earnest hope, and such a perfect love for thy Saviour and thy God, that if thou shouldest be called upon to stand the trials of the last days, thou mayest look upward for the sign of the Son of Man in Heaven, and withstand all the allurements and temptations to turn either to the right hand or to the left, in full assurance that thy redemption draweth nigh.

O Lord God, grant me steadfastness in Thy faith, give me, I entreat Thee, great courage to endure all things for Thy dear Son's sake, and grant that if I live in the last times, I may be among the elect, for whose sake those days shall be shortened.

To this end grant me to live soberly, holily, honestly, that I may not be like those, who in the days of Noe, were found living in ease and luxury, and who were swept from the earth; but grant me to live in a state of continual preparation, expectation, and recollection, that when I hear the voice of the archangel and the

trump of God, I may be caught up and meet Thee, the Lord, in the air, and dwell for ever with Thee in Thy blessed and glorious kingdom. *Amen.*

Friday

AFTER SIXTH SUNDAY.

AND THEN SHALL APPEAR THE SIGN OF THE SON OF MAN IN HEAVEN.—St. Matthew, xxiv. 30.

WHEN I meditate upon the Son of Man, I think of the reason why the Son of God became the Son of Man. He came to achieve a glorious triumph over sin and death; He came to establish His kingdom on earth, and for this He died upon the cross. He came to be lifted up from the earth, and to draw all men unto Him. He gained His victory by the cross, and the cross is His sign by which all His followers may know Him. But His followers must learn to feel the cross, if they would see the sign of the Son of Man in the last day without fear; they must set themselves by the cross, and train themselves up by its proportions, if they wish to attain that perfect stature which we must possess if we would "be like Him." Exalt the cross within thee, O my soul, but stand off from

pride, ambition, avarice, for the cross is poverty and humility; let go the love of sensual and worldly pleasures, for the cross is mortification; wage a perpetual war against the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, they are enemies to the cross; but take up thy cross, follow thy Saviour and thy God; die unto the world; live only to thy Lord; and then, crucified to all carnal affections and lusts, thou mayest hope for a share in His exaltation and triumphs.

O my soul, cherish the sign of the Son of Man in thy heart. At present thou followest the cross only in name; thou hast not in earnest begun to carry thy share in its burthens and its toils; but let it have room to expand and grow within thee; nourish it by patience, by humility, by bearing all things, believing all things, and enduring all things. Water it with the tears of compunction shed over thy many sins, and thy failures in carrying thy load steadily. In this school of His blessed cross our Lord will teach thee all good; in it He will not cease to communicate to thee all grace; till at length He will draw thee up to Himself, and make thee His own for ever.

Saturday

AFTER SIXTH SUNDAY.

I SAID, BEHOLD ME, BEHOLD ME.—Isaiah, lxv. 1.

THE season of Christmas and Epiphany closes this day; but before I finally take leave of it, I desire to reconsider some points concerning the incarnation, birth, and infancy of the blessed Saviour of the world, that I may carry with me a vivid picture of the whole. How can I know whether another Christmas, another Epiphany, will see me among those who wait in the temple for the consolation of Israel? How can I be sure that GOD will vouchsafe me another season wherein to consider the stupendous mystery of the incarnation of His blessed Son, and to adore Him for all the great work of His redeeming love.

The Son of GOD came down to us from heaven, that we might obtain the adoption of sons; GOD became Man, that man might partake of the divine nature and favour. CHRIST appeared

in the world, and was born in the latter days, to shew us that the benefits of His incarnation did not respect this present life, but eternity. He, Who was the blessed peace-maker between God and man, chose to appear in the reign of a peaceful prince, who had given a universal rest to the world from the storms of war: He chose a time for His entry when the Israelites were under the hardships of slavery and servitude, that Himself might be our mighty deliverer: He, Whose kingdom was not of this world, was willing to be born into it under the government of a foreign power. He was conceived and born of a pure Virgin, to put us in mind that He is not spiritually conceived or born but in the hearts of those who are spiritually virgins before Him; who are not wedded to the world nor to the devil, but to God by a spiritual union. He was born pure and holy that He might sanctify the impure and corrupted nature in which we are born. He was born of a Virgin that was espoused, that He might make matrimony His own institution honourable among men. He was born in the darkness of night, Who was the true light of the world shining in dark places. He, Who is the true nourishment and

food of our souls, was laid in a manger. He was born among the beasts of the field that He might restore men to their former dignity, who, by their sins, too much resembled them. He, the living bread, was born in Bethlehem, "the House of Bread."

This great mystery was revealed to shepherds, because the Shepherd of our souls was come to bring back the lost sheep into the right way. The tidings of great joy were revealed to mean men, because no man shall have a share in it, but he that is despicable in his own eyes. And the shepherds were watching, because only those who watch, shall share the blessings of the nativity. Glory was sung to God in the highest, that men might be raised out of the deep of their sins. A true peace was procured for us by that birth, for then were we reconciled to God; peace was restored to us, for he who led us captive, was then himself overcome.

My soul, adore the immensity of His power, Who, out of two things so vastly distant as the divine and human natures, could make so near a union; that One and the same Person could be both God and man. Stand in awe, at the infinite wisdom that contrived so vast a scheme for

the redemption of man. Infinite goodness was offended; infinite satisfaction was required. Man had not wherewith to pay; God became man — He paid the debt — He became the ransom: justice was appeased; mercy reigned triumphant. O Thou, Who for my sake didst become man, to redeem me from the burden of my sins; Who seest that I still live in the midst of so great trials and temptations that I cannot stand upright; Oh, let me, to whom Thou hast been so infinitely merciful, adore Thee my Saviour; and let the angels that attended at Thy birth, fill my mouth with the most sacred praises. Glory be to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men. *Amen.*

Septuagesima Sunday.

KNOW YE NOT THAT THEY WHICH RUN IN A RACE RUN ALL, BUT ONE RECEIVETH THE PRIZE? SO RUN, THAT YE MAY OBTAIN.—1 Cor. ix. 24.

IN looking upon this life as a race, I must observe, in the first place, that, though all run, one only receiveth the prize. This is the same thing as the strait gate and the narrow way, found by so few; the many called, but the few chosen; and the remnant, that shall endure unto the end. Now, seeing that so few attain to the prize, it must needs be that difficulties and dangers attend this race; and, therefore, it becomes needful to consider the subject gravely and maturely, in order that I may so run, as to obtain.

Two things are to be considered in a race. 1st., the judge; he who prepares the runners, makes the course ready, decides upon the merits of the parties, and awards the prize. 2nd., the party running, how he is to start, to go forward,

how to conduct himself during the race; and on the arrival at the goal, his fitness or unfitness to receive the prize. The Judge is Almighty God; He has, in His infinite goodness, placed me in a position to run for the prize; He has ordained helps and aids to enable me to obtain it. He ever surrounds me with His everlasting arms; prevents my footsteps from slipping; sends down light and food from heaven, to guide and support me in my way; and ever holds up the crown to refresh my weary spirits, and enable me to make fresh exertions to win it. He puts all in my power; I have only to obey His laws, to use His means of grace, to trust entirely to Him, never to be faint or weary, or discouraged or despairing; but to throw myself entirely upon His mercy, to run as He desires, and to leave the rest to Him.

As regards my part in this race, there are many things which I must observe, or I never can hope to attain the prize. The race is not easy, but it is possible; and it is not my own strength or swiftness which will enable me to win it.

In the first place: as I have only a certain time allowed me for my race, as "Man that is

born of a woman, is of few days," I must be careful to spend my time profitably, and in such a manner as will forward me on the course; I must apportion it so as to give proper attention to the duties to which God has called me; to neglect no times for devotion, and to cut off all useless and frivolous diversions; in proportion as I feel the importance of the race in which I am engaged, I shall be less anxious to engage in any pursuits and employments which are not directly concerned with my race.

Secondly. I must be careful that all my intentions are pure, and are solely fixed on running properly my race according to God's rules, and not carried away by anxiety for applause of men, or any other low motive.

Thirdly. I must always remember my Judge, in Whose presence I am running; that recollection will keep me from wandering and loitering on my way, and will bear up my strength for my journey.

Fourthly. Christian sobriety is entirely requisite; for if I press forward too eagerly, I may exert myself beyond my strength, and then I may be tempted to lag behind. I must not be induced to turn to the right or to the left, or to

indulge in undue mirth with my fellows. I must not be discouraged if others outstrip me, nor elated if I seem to be going on rapidly and easily myself. Neither must I be cast down when troubles or dangers and difficulties come upon me; but I must recollect the presence of the Judge, and must run my course calmly, evenly, always doing my best, but ever with sobriety.

I can hardly enumerate all the virtues and qualities requisite; nevertheless I wish to bear in mind a few more of the most prominent, that I may present myself with a fuller picture of what I require in this arduous contest.

After sobriety, there is humility, modesty, contentedness, obedience, endurance; and how can I obtain and keep all these so as to bring them forth and use them when they are wanted? My soul! this is a grave thought, and truly thou wouldst be overwhelmed, were it not for the all-sustaining hand of thy merciful Father. By His love, and by love to Him for all that He has done, suffered, promised for thee, thou canst alone be supported through the race which is before thee. The Saviour is by thee, He lifts up the cross before thee, He puts into thee all

the strength which, by His sufferings, He has purchased for thee, and He bids thee be of good cheer, and as He has overcome for thee, so He has obtained that by Him thou shalt overcome.

O LORD, we beseech Thee favourably to hear the prayers of Thy people; that we, who are justly punished for our offences, may be mercifully delivered by Thy goodness, for the glory of Thy Name; through JESUS CHRIST our Saviour, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one GOD, world without end. *Amen.*

Monday

AFTER SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

NOW THEY DO IT TO OBTAIN A CORRUPTIBLE CROWN; BUT WE AN INCORRUPTIBLE.—1 Corinthians, ix. 25.

IN a race all strive for a prize, and in order to run well, all prepare themselves by living according to a rule, which brings their bodies into better condition for running. Great pains are taken to win the race, yet the prize is but a crown of leaves or grass, which soon withers, and the victory is soon forgotten. What are to us, now, the greatest victors at the games to which the apostle refers in this epistle? Very few of their names are preserved to us; those whose names are preserved in history are known only to the learned; both victor and judge have crumbled to dust, their deeds uncared for, even their graves forgotten.

The crown which is sought in the great Christian race must alike be obtained by those who have undergone regular discipline for the race,

and who have learnt to be temperate in all things. The Great Judge holds up before us the crown which, even after all our efforts, we are not worthy to wear, for our bodies are soiled and heated by the conflict; the Gracious Judge has provided a remedy; we may wash and be made white in the blood of the Lamb, and then we may hope to wear that unfading and immortal crown. The triumph of the just is eternal, and their never-fading crown is God Himself. O most happy diadem! O most precious garland of the saints! What shall be the honour of the just, who shall sit above sun, moon, and firmament, crowned by the hand of God Himself; and with that crown of gold graven with the seal of holiness, and the glory of honour! And this glory reaches such a height that Christ Himself tells us, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne."

O happy labour of the victorious, and glorious combat of the just, against the vices and temptations of the world, whose victory gains so inestimable a reward from the most high and most merciful God.

My soul, seeing then, that if thou endure temptation thou shalt receive the crown of life, that crown of glory which fadeth not away, thou must persevere in all discipline, running with patience the race which is set before thee; looking unto JESUS, the Author and Finisher of our faith; and endeavouring to follow, as thy pattern, the blessed steps of His most holy life. For what joy will there be in heaven, for one who has given himself up to this world? How will the immortal crown suit features, seamed and distorted by sin? Strive, therefore, to purify thyself, even as He is pure; and mortify thy members which are upon earth, that when CHRIST shall appear, thou mayest also appear with Him in glory.

Tuesday

AFTER SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

BUT I KEEP UNDER MY BODY, AND BRING IT INTO SUBJECTION: LEST THAT BY ANY MEANS, WHEN I HAVE PREACHED TO OTHERS, I MYSELF SHOULD BE A CASTAWAY.—1 Cor. ix. 27.

THE apostle, in considering the race in which we are engaged, says, that we are not to fight as if beating the air, nor to run as though there were no definite mark; but that as we are engaged in a reality, an actual conflict, if we do not make our bodies obedient and subject to the laws by which we act, we shall be carried away without our will, and become reprobate. The impetus which we get in running is so great, that unless we are entirely under control, we shall be carried far away from the mark.

To bring under the body, is to mortify it, to purge from it all corrupt affections, and to make it entirely subject to the will of God.

Jesus Christ commands us to deny ourselves,

and to take up our cross daily, because the corruption of our nature requires that we should be forbidden everything which will increase our disorder. He commands us, therefore, to deny our own wisdom, because we are really blind as to what concerns our own true good, and should infallibly ruin ourselves, if left to our own choice.

He commands us to deny our appetites, because intemperance would ruin us.

He forbids us to give way to our passions; because a thousand evils will follow if we should do so.

He obliges us to keep a strict watch over our hearts, because from them proceed hypocrisy, malice, covetousness, and many other evils.

We are forbidden to set our hearts upon the world, and everything in it, because our eternal happiness depends upon our loving God with all our heart and soul.

We are obliged to love our neighbour and our very enemies, and are forbidden to hate, to contend with, or to hurt them, because this would exasperate our minds, and grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by Which we are sanctified, being against that charity which God delights in.

We are forbidden all repining when God afflicts us, because, as sinners, suffering is due to us. And because our bodies have a very great influence over our souls, we are commanded to fast and to be strictly temperate at all times, and to deny ourselves the love of sensual pleasures and self-indulgence. We are commanded to deny all ways of folly, vanity, and false satisfactions, that we may be able to take satisfaction in the ways of God.

My soul, thou seest what a strict watch it requires to keep under the body; the very expression, "bring into subjection," implies a struggle, but when the struggle is for life itself, it is well worth encountering. Thou must deny thyself in everything, even those things which give innocent pleasure: thy devotions, thou must bring into subjection: an entirely obedient spirit being the end and object of all mortification, unless *that* is kept in view, all fastings and deeds of devotion will be useless; for even thy fastings, and watchings, and prayers, must be conducted with the same mortified spirit, lest thou run wild and become intemperate in thy holy things; if thou dost, thou wilt surely become speedily a castaway.

Wednesday

AFTER SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

FOR THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS LIKE UNTO A MAN THAT IS AN HOUSEHOLDER.—St. Matthew, xx. 1.

IT seems the design of the Church in introducing this parable, after having described in the epistle the labours and pains necessary to the attainment of the self-denial and mortification for the same end, to shew that the crown or reward is not given, as earned by those pains and labours, but is the free, unmerited and unrestricted gift of God.

As this parable seems to point to certain times and periods at which God called His people unto Him, I may profitably endeavour to follow out the meaning, and try to edify myself thereby. It is most evident that by the householder is meant God; by the labourers those whom God has chosen and elected in all ages to be His peculiar people; by the vineyard the Church must be intended; the market-place must be the

world, or properly all that is not the Church; and the penny is the recompence granted by the Sovereign Judge to all who have laboured in His Church.

God made man in His own image; He made him good, happy, and placed him in a situation which promised continuation of bliss, on certain conditions; thus did God call our first parents into His vineyard; but from this state of bliss and innocence they fell, and became subject to all the miseries, and sins, and wretchedness, to all the labours and sorrows, which their curse entailed upon all their children and descendants. But in the midst of all this misery, there was still seen the greatness of the Divine mercy,—a mysterious promise of recovery and redemption from the sin and bondage, which their transgression had entailed upon their race.

This promise was made more clearly and plainly, when at the sixth hour (as we may say,) the patriarchs and Moses were called into the vineyard. The law then gave work, and a promise of reward to all those who bore, as it were, in the constant observance of its rites and ceremonies, the "burthen and heat of the day." The prophets were called (as at the

ninth hour,) to speak more expressly of the great design of man's redemption; to prepare men to embrace it, and that, in a more spiritual way than they had before been accustomed to; as became the spiritual kingdom of Messias — as "the Mediator" of a "better covenant" than was made with those who had gone before. Then came that gracious call at the eleventh hour, when the Gentiles who had been standing in the market-place, idle, because no man had hired them, were sent into the vineyard to work the works of evangelical righteousness. Thus were we Gentiles called from idleness and folly, and sin, in the world, to quiet, and rest, and true comfort and peace of mind, in the Church. O what a blessed, happy change, that we, who were strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope, without God in the world, should be made fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God.

O that men would therefore praise the Lord for His goodness, and declare the wonders that He doeth for the children of men! For He gathered them out of all lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south. When they went astray in the wilder-

ness out of the way, and found no city to dwell in; hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them; then He delivered them out of their distress, and led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation, even the glorious and eternal mansions of the Heavenly Jerusalem.

Thursday

AFTER SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

GO YE ALSO INTO THE VINEYARD; AND WHATSOEVER IS RIGHT, THAT SHALL YE RECEIVE.—
Matt. xx. 7.

I CONSIDERED yesterday the introduction of the labourers into the vineyard; I will now proceed to meditate upon the work and the reward.

GOD has placed us in His Holy Church, and done all to make us happy and to give us opportunities of advancing; we, on our part, must co-operate, and do what lies in us to improve these opportunities, whatever our hands find to do, to do it with all our might. Even in the state of innocence there was a duty to be performed, which, though a pleasant service, was still a duty. How much more are we obliged to be industrious, for by our own transgressions our work has become more difficult, but it is quite as indispensable in order to our receiving the

reward. A true and hearty endeavour to serve God, a willing mind, and steady perseverance, are the only things that can make our service acceptable. Without these, we may have done more work, and borne the burthen and heat of the day, perhaps complaining of a hard task-master, or giving our service grudgingly. Surely such service cannot be counted acceptable in the sight of the Searcher of hearts. There may be some, who, called late into the vineyard, are endued with such powers, such zeal, and spiritual life and vigour, that in a short space of time they may do more work, may have laboured more abundantly than all who have been bearing the burthen and heat of the day. Of this sort was the apostle St. Paul, "who was born out of due time;" and so, in a sense, the least of the apostles; and yet, because he laboured more abundantly than they all, he was nothing behind the very chiefest of them, in signs, in wonders, and mighty deeds, and abundance of heavenly visions and revelations.

Others there may be who have been standing idle, beckoned to, and encouraged by the Lord to enter the vineyard, but who, from laziness and indifference, or from worse feelings than

these, put off labouring in the LORD's service; such think they may enter at the eleventh hour, and so make sure of their reward. They saunter about and wait for a more "convenient season;" but suddenly the night cometh when no man can work. I desire not to think of the state of such people. Perhaps it may not be worse than the condition of some who, having entered the vineyard, do no work, or rather mar the labour of others, and say, "Tush, GOD careth not for it."

But as to the reward. No one who has watched his own heart, and has seen imperfection creeping over the works upon which he has bestowed most pains; who has watched the arrogant thoughts bred in the performance of the holiest duties; who has heard light or unseemly words used when the bridle has been the least relaxed; who has watched what an effect the most trifling temptation has in disturbing the well laid plans of conduct; nobody who has candidly watched the workings of his own soul, but must acknowledge that when we have done all those things that are commanded, we are unprofitable servants, and are abundantly overpaid by the present blessings, and mercy, and long-suffering, for all our labours.

How then can we but say, that the penny which we may receive when the even is come, is the free, undeserved gift of our heavenly Father; that we have only done what is our duty to do; and that He has acted as a generous, loving, and forgiving Master? Praise the Lord then, O my soul, and all that is within me praise His holy name. Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits. Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; Who healeth all thy diseases; Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; Who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies; Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things, so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's. He made His ways known unto Moses; His acts unto the children of Israel. The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide: neither keepeth He His anger for ever. He hath not dealt with us according to our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. Bless the Lord, all His works, in all places of His dominion; praise thou the Lord, O my soul.

Friday

AFTER SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

THESE LAST HAVE WROUGHT BUT ONE HOUR, AND THOU HAST MADE THEM EQUAL UNTO US, WHICH HAVE BORNE THE BURDEN AND HEAT OF THE DAY.—St. Matt. xx. 12.

WHEN I consider, that after having done all, I am a miserably unprofitable servant, I can hardly think that any person could be so blind to their own state, as to grudge the higher rewards of others; excepting that the very proneness to evil, and the susceptibility to receive impressions may cause spiritual envy to enter, at the very moment I am crying, God be merciful to me a sinner. We all deserve alike, all alike ought to receive indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish; but it is God's mercy which is pleased to give me a share of His promises, and surely I have no right to repine should others receive a higher reward, for why should my eye be evil because He is good? Is it not lawful for Him to do as He will with His

own? Every Christian is elect, precious, chosen out of the world. We are a royal priesthood, a peculiar people, but among this people there are distributed diversities of gifts; some are apostles, some prophets, and some teachers; to some is given the word of wisdom; to others the word of knowledge; to others faith and the gifts of healing; to others prophecy, working of miracles, discerning of spirits, divers kinds of tongues, interpretation of tongues. Seeing, therefore, that there are diversities of gifts, there must be also diversities of reward. We are all members of one body; therefore, as the parts of a body differ in use, and have various degrees of honour, and yet no member complains that it has not the functions of another, in like manner ought the members of the body of Christ faithfully to discharge the trust committed to them, so as to receive the reward which the great Lord of all thinks right, not looking at what others receive, but at their own particular deserts. If we look at things in that light, it cannot be but that each will find himself over-paid, and instead of saying with the labourers, "These have wrought but one hour, and Thou hast made them equal unto us," will exclaim, "What is Thy servant, that

Thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am!"

O Lord, I am less than all Thy mercies, and all Thy truth which Thou hast shewed to Thy servant, and what can I say more unto Thee?

For Thou, Lord God, knowest Thy servant.

What is Thy servant, Lord God, and what is my house, that Thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am? that Thou hast loved me hitherto?

What shall I render unto the Lord for all the benefits that He has done unto me? What thanks can we render unto God for all the joy wherewith we joy before Him?

To Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly, above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us; to Him be glory in the Church, in Christ, throughout all ages, world without end. *Amen.*

Saturday

AFTER SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

FOR MANY BE CALLED, BUT FEW CHOSEN.—
St. Matt. xx. 16.

THERE is something extremely awful and alarming in this passage. It is a positive declaration of a fact, part of which I know, the rest I believe as the declaration of CHRIST Himself. The many called — all the elect people of GOD; beginning from Adam, made after GOD's image and likeness; going on through the Jewish people: — I picture to myself the numbers, yea the multitudes, recollecting that when Moses and Aaron numbered the people in the wilderness there were six hundred and three thousand, six hundred and fifty, from twenty years and upwards. Then when the Gentiles were called unto the obedience of the gospel, the multitudes who, since the coming of our LORD, have been baptised into His Church; the numbers who are daily being born, and being received into

covenant with Him. These are the many called. But when I hear that, of all these, but few will be chosen, it behoves me to look earnestly and take heed, lest that I, having been called, should not be among the chosen.

On looking into my own soul, I see a very great propensity to self-satisfaction; by which I mean, not only a feeling of satisfaction in having done certain things, but a tendency to rest contented with having done them, and to remain still in agreeable contemplation, and false security, that as those things have been done, therefore I am good, and safe, and that of course I shall improve. This very dangerous state of drowsiness or quiescence, is the worst condition in which I can be placed; in spiritual life there is no such thing as standing still; if I fancy such a thing, I may be sure that I am imperceptibly sliding down. I have been called, brought unto Christ's Church by baptism; for a time, as a babe in Christ, milk is to be my food, and only such small service as babes can perform is expected of me: but afterwards, leaving the principles, I am to go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith towards God, of the

doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgments; and these I will do if God permit. Then comes that most terrible of sentences which explains how, after falling away from being called, it is not possible to be chosen:—

"For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost;

"And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come;

"If they fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify the Lord afresh, and put Him to an open shame."

As I am thus called to such a responsibility, and as the difficulty of increasing in holiness and of going on to perfection becomes the more apparent the longer I reflect on it, I must deeply consider how it is possible to go on and so persevere unto the end, as to be finally placed among the chosen sheep at the right hand of our Lord, not among the reprobate goats of His left.

It is by applying the merits of Jesus to our own souls that we can be saved. Not by a bare belief that Christ having suffered and shed His blood for our sins, we are saved; but by a con-

stant, active, steady application of His cross and passion, His death and burial, all the passages of His most holy life, all the sufferings of His precious death — to the healing of our wounds, the prevention of our spiritual diseases, the comforting of our sorrows, the easing of our sickness, the continual raising of the tone of our lives and conversation; in short the making the life of Jesus our spiritual life; the death of Jesus the death of our sins; a living and abiding reality, which alone can preserve us among the living branches of the true vine; without Him we can do nothing.

When I shall be so happy as to find Him Whom my soul loveth, I shall be united with Him, I shall live in Him and He in me; for there is this difference between knowledge and love, that knowledge in no manner unites a man with that which he knows, he does not go out of himself, but brings the object unto himself; whereas love unites him closely with that which he loves, the heart is carried into it; he cleaves to it, takes its properties, and is transformed into it. If the thing that I love is nobler and higher than myself, it ennobles and elevates me; if not, it lowers me. If I love the earth, I

become earth. My Saviour, Who could love nothing above Himself, humbled Himself to love our flesh, and became flesh. Since, therefore, the excess of Thy love, my God, has brought Thee down to me, may I not aspire, by loving Thee with all tenderness of my heart, to rise to Thee, to be closely united with Thee, and to become a partaker of Thy divine nature, according to Thy promise.

Sexagesima Sunday.

I WILL GLORY OF THE THINGS WHICH CONCERN MINE INFIRMITIES.—2 Cor. xi. 30.

THERE is nothing in all the round of Christian practice, in which I am so liable to self-deception as concerning the grace of humility. I see my own soul, I perceive all its deformities; I see how much more I possess, both spiritually and temporally, than I am deserving of; I acknowledge myself, and I really see myself to be, a great sinner, yea, the chief of sinners; and yet there is always a propensity in me to exalt myself, to be displeased at the censure of others, and to be anything but what becomes a follower of JESUS. It is a sad state, and one which is perplexing and discomforting in the greatest degree. I consider the most excellent pattern of humility given us by CHRIST Himself, and I desire to follow His example. I also consider that among all the great saints of old, humility was the leading feature of their character; from

the constant contemplation of the Divine Pattern, they grew into such an intense spiritual perception of sin and of imperfection, that they regarded everything that was not God, that had become corrupt through man's fall, with horror and loathing.

St. Paul was placed, as it appears from his eleventh chapter of Corinthians, among persons who boasted of and gloried in their privileges and spiritual attainments. He was equal to any, in birth, in situation, in self-denials, in sufferings, in voluntary mortifications, and he was besides placed at the head of, and was manager of, all the Churches then formed; with all these advantages, he says, "If I needs must glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities." But further, he not only suffered all earthly sufferings, but, as more perilous still to his humility, he was admitted to visions and revelations of the Lord. Yet what does he say? "Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in mine infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." With all these marvellous visions, and sufferings, and doings, for the sake of Christ and the gospel, St. Paul *glories* in weakness; why? because *then*, Christ is to him

all in all. Here is the true reason why I should be humble, as pride must keep me from JESUS.

When I consider what I am, (I hardly dare say in comparison with St. Paul, for that seems too great presumption and irreverence,) but what I am in myself; how every thought, word, and action, is deformed by sin; how little I suffer, how little I do for CHRIST's sake and the gospel's; I shrink within myself, and only marvel how GOD can look upon such a worm of the dust as I am. But I will cling now more closely to JESUS; beseeching Him to inspire me with the grace of true humility, and begging that I may have grace to keep myself by His side, looking up to the blessed pattern of His holy humility.

Yea, LORD JESUS! Thou hast told me to come unto Thee, for Thou art meek and lowly of heart. I come, LORD; I come. O grant me rest for my soul; put on me Thy easy yoke, and light burden; and leave me not, O blessed Saviour; forsake me not; but save me and deliver me, for Thy name's sake.

Monday

AFTER SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY.

A SOWER WENT OUT TO SOW HIS SEED.—St. Luke, viii. 5.

IT is said in the account of this parable in St. Matthew's gospel, that our blessed LORD went into a ship, and from thence delivered the parable to the multitude on shore. The prospect of verdant fields and far-spreading lands, where the husbandman was pursuing his labour, would suggest the subject of the parable to our LORD, and would make it acceptable and of easy application to the multitudes who listened with eager attention to the divine words which proceeded from His lips.

A sower went out. To me this presents two applications:—

First: the actual husbandman who, in order to obtain the end of his hopes and wishes, goes forth, leaves his home, without which there could be no in-gathering of harvest.

Second: the Sower is the SON of GOD, Who

left the bosom of His Father, came down from heaven, that He might sow the seed of the gospel of His kingdom, and plant the grace of God in the hearts of all those who turned to Him with faith and repentance. Yes, gracious Lord, Thou visitest the earth, even man whom Thou formedst from the ground, and waterest it with the dew of Thy blessing. Thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God which is full of water, even Thy overflowing and abundant grace, given to us in the waters of baptism. Thou preparest their corn, in sowing the seed of Thy holy word. Thou waterest the ridges of our souls; Thou makest them soft with showers of grace and mercy; Thou blessest the springing thereof; Thou crownest the year with Thy goodness. Thy paths, wherever Thou goest or dwellest, drop fatness. They drop upon the pastures of the wilderness of our souls, and the little hills rejoice on every side. The pastures, Thy holy churches, are clothed with flocks; the valleys, the abodes of Thy faithful ones, are covered over with corn, even the fruits of Thy Blessed Spirit; they shout for joy; they sing.

The word of God is compared to seed, because of its fructifying and increasing nature; because

it has in it an active principle; of this divine seed consists that heavenly bread, of which whoever eateth, shall live for ever.

It is this seed which brings forth all the graces of Christianity, and which keeps up the divine life in the soul; it is this, which growing and expanding in the good ground of the well-disciplined heart, brings forth the knowledge and love of our Lord and Saviour; and is a preparation for heaven, and an earnest of the glorious and immortal inheritance. For, wheresoever the seed is sown, and springs up and brings forth fruit unto holiness, the end will be everlasting life.

O Divine Sower of the seed, come to me I beseech Thee; and as Thou hast cast the seed of Thy grace in my heart, grant, I beseech Thee, that, watering it with the dew of Thy blessing, with the tears of my penitence, with the water shed from thy precious side, it may bring forth much fruit, and may be ever springing up and throwing out the healthful shoots of fresh graces and gifts in my soul, to Thy honour and glory, most blessed Saviour, Who art both the Sower of the seed, and the Gatherer of the increase.

Tuesday

AFTER SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY.

AND AS HE SOWED, SOME FELL BY THE WAY SIDE; AND IT WAS TRODDEN DOWN, AND THE FOWLS OF THE AIR DEVOURED IT.—St. Luke, viii. 5.

CONSIDER, O my soul, how, as the sower proceeded on his way, some seeds fell on his path. The highway is trodden, flattened, beaten by the passing along of every sort of person, dusty, miry, subject to the cries and noises of unruly multitudes; to it are attracted birds of prey, who expect to find of the refuse and leavings of such multitudes of passers, wherewith to satisfy their hunger. The highway is like a human soul, exposed to the temptations of the world; trodden down and beaten by association with evil company; miry and dusty with bad thoughts, evil desires, and turbulent passions; hardened by the continual traffic of the world; unwatered, unweeded, by the cleansing, purifying, softening influence of God's Holy Spirit. How

can it be, but that when the seed of God's word is dropped upon the hard surface, it should not even make an effort at receiving it; but that the birds of the air — temptations and wickedness, sent by the devil — pluck it off the unkindly soil and devour it.

My soul, open thyself to the influence of God's Blessed Spirit; thou hast received the seed at baptism; O be not hardened and thus laid bare to the assaults of the devil, but give the good seed room to expand within thee, that it may bring forth fruit in due season.

Some seed fell upon a rock; Grant, O Lord, that I may never so receive Thy gracious word; may I never give it such superficial attention as to hear, receive with joy, and then allow it to wither for lack of moisture, for want of application to those aids and means of grace, which Thou hast graciously placed within my reach;— from hardness of heart, and contempt of Thy word and commandment, Good Lord, deliver me.

But the word falls among thorns; when the heart is full of the cares of the world, love of riches, pleasures, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, these are the

thorns which suffer the word to be heard, and even to spring up, but when it is up, it brings forth no fruit, but is choked, stifled, and made of none effect.

Great and glorious God, Who alone art worthy of our love and service, cure me of, and preserve me from, the sin and vanity of admiring the world. Give me grace to forsake all covetous desires, and immoderate love of riches, and pleasures, through Jesus Christ. Grant that I may both perceive and know what things I ought to do, and also may have grace and strength faithfully to perform the same, through Jesus Christ.

Wednesday

AFTER SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY.

AND OTHER FELL ON GOOD GROUND, AND SPRANG UP, AND BARE FRUIT AN HUNDREDFOLD.—St. Luke, viii. 8.

IN the seed which fell on good ground, and which alone was productive when all the other seeds had either been destroyed, or their growth stopped, I find abundant matter for meditation. In what does the goodness of the seed consist? It must be not only naturally fertile, but it must have been cultivated and prepared for the reception of the seed; it must have been dug up, the stones and weeds removed; it must have been watered and its surface smoothed, so that no irregularities should impede the growth of the seed.

In the interpretation of the parable, our blessed LORD says that the good ground is the honest and good heart. The heart is not naturally good; it is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. If this be so, some

preparation must be necessary to make that which was evil, good. I know that God has ordained means by which that which was evil is made good; by which that which was impure, is cleansed and purified.

Baptism, I know, is the means by which the heart, or more properly the soul, is placed in a condition to receive all the gifts and graces conveyed by God's Word. As the ground would be unfit for cultivation if the sun were not to shine upon it, thereby enabling the husbandman to do his work of preparation effectually, so the light of God's grace fits and prepares the soul for the instructions which may hereafter be given to it, and when it then hears the word, it receives it with joy, and brings forth all the fruits of grace and faith in perfection.

The preparation which is necessary before the Word of God can be heard effectually, furnishes matter for serious consideration. The soul must be entirely given up to God; it must be washed with bitter tears of penitence; it must be chastened and subdued by fasting; it must be softened and elevated by love; it must be strengthened and refreshed by prayer, and by the reception of the Eucharist; it must be exercised in patience,

humility, devotion, recollection, meekness, long-suffering, and gentleness. Blessed LORD, Saviour of my soul, CHRIST my Redeemer, regard the supplications of Thy servant. Thou Who wast perfect man, descend into my soul, and bring all into subjection to Thy holy will; subdue, pierce, soften this hard heart. Thou Whose heart was pierced with a cruel spear, grant that the blood and the water which flowed from thence may be of sacramental efficacy in the cleansing and sustaining of my heart, and grant that Thy holy Word may live and grow in me, and bring forth fruit, even an hundred-fold. *Amen.*

Thursday

AFTER SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY.

AND BRING FORTH FRUIT WITH PATIENCE.—
St. Luke, viii. 15.

AFTER hearing the word, the fruit can only be brought forth with patience. Now I know that any science, or trade, or accomplishment, cannot be acquired without much application and patience; in general, the greater the worth of the acquirement, the more patience is necessary in getting it. So it is in the acquirement of religious habits, and of all the virtues and graces which are requisite to form a perfect man in CHRIST JESUS.

I know how much I have need of patience in my intercourse with others; I find that when I have resolved to behave and to act with such recollection, and to be so guarded in my speech as not for an instant to forget GOD's presence, I am often betrayed into too much levity, or too much talking and laughing; I must try again;

endeavour to do better next time; I must have patience. Some persons irritate me by their manner, or by certain things they say; I feel inclined to be angry; why do I not bear this also patiently? Even with little children patience is necessary; and so, with all the round of common every-day duties; the want of patience retards the production of the works of the Spirit; the cultivation of it gives life and vigour to their growth.

But, in the inward life, patience becomes even more requisite. The examination of conscience brings to light many secret faults; these have to be combatted one by one; each separately, until it has been exterminated. This is a slow and painful process; during its process have I reason to bewail the frequent relapses into faults from which I had hoped a long course of discipline had freed me. Patience and God's mercy alone will help me through the struggle, which, when over, and the fault trodden down, the conflict is not over; the next sin, or error, or fault, must be taken and corrected in a like manner. So must all virtues be acquired. Be of good cheer, my soul, this is thy Saviour's light yoke and easy burthen. Run with patience the race set

before thee; look unto Him; and in His good time, if thou do but persevere unto the end, thou wilt find thy work done, thy strength and warfare over, and thy garments washed in the blood of the Lamb; only have patience; watch, pray, work; go on, persevere; call again, and again, and again, unto thy Saviour; He will hear thee, and patience will have her perfect work.

O blessed Jesus, Thou most perfect model of patience, I would place Thee continually before me; I see Thy childhood of pain and submission patiently endured; Thy manhood of trial, and sorrow, and labour, patiently borne; Thy patient agony; Thy patient bearing of the taunts, the revilings, the spittings, the mockings, the scourgings, the nailing to the cross; and at the end, having endured all, bowing Thy gracious head, saying, "It is finished." O Lord, if Thou didst, for my sins, bear thus patiently all these cruel tortures, how much more ought I to bear patiently the light burthen which, for those sins, Thou imposest upon me. Grant me never ungratefully to repine, but ever to bow my will to Thy blessed decrees, and say with unfeigned humility and submission, Thy will be done.

Friday

AFTER SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY.

YE SHALL NOT SURELY DIE.—Gen. iii. 4.

THE state of our first parents, in the garden of Eden, makes the contemplation of their fall a most perplexing subject.

Behold the pair, perfect in their form, innocent, happy in themselves and in each other; surrounded by all the abounding wealth of nature; without restraint; served by all creatures, which in that state of innocence were quite harmless, and ministered to their comfort and enjoyment; above all, having GOD Himself as their friend, with Whose munificent bounty to themselves they were well acquainted, and Whose single command respecting the fruit of the tree of knowledge they felt themselves bound to obey. Consider the pair, O my soul; remember the ties of gratitude and love which bound them to their LORD, their Friend, their Benefactor and their

God; and then see the detestable nature of sin, even the transgression of a command of our God. What appears so shocking, so unnatural, and so contrary to reason in the transgression of Eve, is no less so in the disobedience of which I am daily guilty; only I am surrounded by artificial wants, and by the complicated network which the world throws round us in this unreal state of existence, which veils the true nature of the slightest deviation from the path of virtue.

Eve could not have been aware of the mischievous intentions of the deadly serpent; how could she guard against his attacks? In his first words he implied doubt of God's justice, and then was the time to have fled from his insidious approaches. This is thy lesson, O my soul! the entrance of thoughts into the mind is in itself no sin, but in the entertainment of them consists the harm. And then if, after fostering the deadly companion in thy bosom, thou goest on to listen to its vile insinuations and temptations to evil, thou art lost. When thou canst detect the approach of the serpent, O regard not the beauty of its appearance, or its harmless, noiseless motions; but fly from it, detest it, loathe and abhor it: one sin brought ruin to the whole

human race; how much more shouldst thou not fear that the commission of one single wilful sin may destroy thee!

But behold, O Lord, I am weak, I can do nothing of myself. Thou hast once for all stretched out Thine arms upon the cross to save and protect me; to that Thy cross, I flee; to that cross I cling. O suffer me not to be tempted above my strength; say to my soul, My grace is sufficient for thee. I know that I am naked of every good work. Clothe me, blessed Lord, with Thy righteousness, and keep me ever under the shadow of Thy wings; drive me not away from Thee, but as Thou hast purchased for me a rest and an inheritance in Thy celestial paradise, O let me not fall away from Thee through temptation, but grant me to dwell with Thee for ever. *Amen.*

Saturday

AFTER SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY.

AND THE ARK WENT UPON THE FACE OF THE WATERS.—
Genesis, vii. 18.

I SEE in the ark the great type of the Church. Behold, the great day had arrived on which God had determined to destroy all the earth, excepting those who were predestined and chosen out of the world. Noah and his family, beasts both clean and unclean, these were enclosed in the ark of safety; when lo! the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of Heaven were opened. Then was there a great cry in all the earth, which was an exceeding bitter cry, and which has not been equalled since; neither shall be until the last trumpet shall sound, when all the tribes of the earth shall mourn, and the elect shall finally be separated by the mercy of God, and shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. The waters grow higher and higher; all the plain is covered; all the hills are covered;

then is there a great silence; nothing is living; no sound but the voice of God in the waters, which now cover the tops of the mountains. Still the ark floats on; it goes to and fro on the waters, perfectly secure, rising as the water heightens, until the waters are stopped; as they decrease, still the ark descends with them, until it finds a rest on the top of Mount Ararat.

It has pleased God to set apart some out of the world, to make them His own peculiar people, and to secure them in the ark of His Church. How marvellously has this sacred ark been preserved in all ages; during which it has had to strive in and with the world; to defy the power of princes; to float on in spite of the floods of ungodliness, the waves of adversity; still to survive though fierce foes were raging around; and amid the confusion of nations, the wars and rumours of wars, calmly and silently, on the face of the waters, to rise as they have risen, to fall with them. Surely we have been permitted to see that when the Sun of Righteousness cast the shadow of our sacred ark on the desolate, wide water around her, how soon that shadow has had a holy influence, and how many have been purified and made fit to enter into it, who began only

by gazing on the image which so faintly pourtrayed the reality of its beauty.

O Thou gracious Guide of this our ark; Thou, the Great Builder of our Zion, our resting-place; Thou, Who hast vouchsafed me, unworthy, a place in so holy, so sacred a refuge; grant that I may go to and fro on the waters, *in* the world, but not *of* the world, secure under Thy guidance; looking only unto Thee, the Author and Finisher of our faith, until the day when Thy ark shall rest upon the mount, when Thou wilt have accomplished Thine elect, and wilt come to judge all men. O grant that I may be found in that day among the *clean*, who are fit to be offered a holy sacrifice unto Thee.

My soul, consider the gratitude thou owest to God for placing thee in this ark of refuge. To Noah it was only an escape from temporal death; to thee it is a means of preservation from eternal damnation; pray earnestly to be kept within this ark; pray for the preservation of the ark itself. Thou mayest well love it, it hath been the means of saving thee. O pray for the peace of Jerusalem; they shall prosper that love thee. "They shall go from strength to strength; every one of them in Zion appeareth before God."

Quinquagesima Sunday.

THOUGH I SPEAK WITH THE TONGUES OF MEN AND OF ANGELS, AND HAVE NOT CHARITY, I AM BECOME AS SOUNDING BRASS, OR A TINKLING CYMBAL.—1 Cor. xiii. 1.

I PICTURE to myself one, well instructed in every branch of religious knowledge; endowed by God with various gifts,—eloquence, melodious voice, persuasive manner, and with all the qualities which make men admirable; and who is admired, and praised, and followed, and caressed, by all men.

Why, with all these advantages, does such a one fail to attach persons permanently to him? why do his words appear to produce so little effect upon the souls of those about him, judging by their conduct? Because there is not charity.

Why do all the eloquent words which rise upon the lips, all the thronging and beautiful thoughts which enter the mind, seem to glide away, as water on a smooth surface? Because there is wanting the great warming, vivifying

principle of charity, which can alone make all other qualities real and alive.

My soul, art thou as sounding brass, or as a tinkling cymbal? hast thou charity? hast thou love? Does thy heart burn within thee when thou hearest of the trials, sorrows, afflictions of others? art thou pitiful? art thou courteous? Dost thou think evil of any? art thou unwilling to excuse and to pass by the failings of others? Dost thou take pleasure in hearing of the faults and failings of others? Art thou inclined to look upon the conduct of others in an unfavourable light? Art thou given to jesting at others? If thou art guilty of any of these things, humble thyself, O my soul, before thy God. And after hearty prayers for pardon, put up the most earnest supplications for the gift of charity; that He will graciously endue thee with that most excellent gift, which will bind up and cement together, as it were, all other virtues within thee. And, remember, that if thou lovest not thy brother, whom thou hast seen, how canst thou love God, Whom thou hast not seen?

Blessed Jesus, how is it possible, that after the contemplation of thy marvellous love to us, I should not love Thee? I imagine that I do

love Thee; and yet, I find that I have still lurking enmities and dislikes against some, whom Thou hast placed near to me, among Thy chosen people, and who are therefore my brethren. I dare hardly confess this to myself; yet, until I can be perfectly in charity with all, neither neglecting nor despising any, I know that I am unworthy of loving Thee. Cleanse out every root of bitterness that is in me, O my gracious Saviour; and, grant, that in relieving the wants of others, and in cultivating in my soul that charity which is the very bond of peace and of all virtues, I may rise to the perfect love of Thee, and may at last be wholly lost and dissolved in that love which I feel that I possess in some measure, yet not perfectly, nor enough, nor in any degree equal to the Divine Object, Who is Love itself.

Monday

AFTER QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

CHARITY SUFFERETH LONG, AND IS KIND; CHARITY ENVIETH NOT; CHARITY VAUNTETH NOT ITSELF, IS NOT PUFFED UP, DOTH NOT BEHAVE ITSELF UNSEEMLY, SEEKETH NOT HER OWN, IS NOT EASILY PROVOKED, THINKETH NO EVIL.—1 Corinthians, xiii. 4, 5.

THE great Christian principle and the chief Christian virtue is love. If I loved my God and my Saviour as I ought to do, how should I abhor all sin, all the most distant approaches to imperfection and evil; how closely should I follow the steps of Him Who is Love! How, also, should I cherish and love my neighbour as one of the same mystical body! If we could but be joined in that divine union, which would be bliss unutterable, how would all minor and petty differences, and troubles, and imperfections, and temptations, become as nothing; when looking up to our adorable Saviour, we should seek nothing but to please Him,—wish for nothing but Himself; and lost in the contemplations of His

glory, should feel nothing but endless love to Him. *He* so loved the world that He became man, took upon Him our nature, and died that we might live. In His human nature how did He give us a pattern of that love, which is to be the aim of all Christian life!

Charity suffereth long. Long-suffering Saviour, Thou wentest through the tedious years of childhood; for thirty years Thou encounteredst the sins and follies of men; and when Thy ministry began, Thou hadst to suffer from the scorn of Thine enemies, the lukewarmness of Thy friends, the unbelief of Thy brethren; at the last, Thou hadst to undergo the contumelies, the waggings of the head, the spittings and scourgings, the cruel mockings; and yet, after all, what were Thy last words, — "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do!" Oh, height of long-suffering charity! oh, kindness beyond thought! How my heart longs to love so loving a Saviour more worthily, with more intense affection, than I find possible to express!

Charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up. Our gracious Lord, in performing His many acts of mercy, ever seemed to retire from public gaze; and several times prevented those whom

He had healed, from proclaiming the miracles He had performed: "See that thou tell no man." Different indeed is this from the conduct of men, who seldom feel displeased at having their good deeds spoken of. How do the other points in this definition of charity rebuke me; how completely do I see the echo and pattern of them in every particular of our Saviour's life. It seems as if love were the fire at which all other Christian graces and virtues were moulded and brought into shape; and, therefore, my soul, do thou now resolve with steadfast purpose, to cultivate this most excellent gift of charity. Cultivate it, by contemplating the several points of our blessed Lord's life, and by dwelling upon every minute incident connected with His precious death. If, when kneeling before the cross, and meditating upon that body broken, bruised and wounded, and that blood poured out, thou art melted and penetrated with a fervent charity, thou wilt be able, when thou risest and goest on thy way, to pour oil and wine into the wounds of the poor distressed Jew, and to feel, that the least service thou doest unto thy brother, is done unto Him, Who loved thee and gave Himself for thee.

Shrove Tuesday.

LORD, THAT I MAY RECEIVE MY SIGHT.—
St. Luke, xviii. 41.

TO-MORROW I begin the solemn season of Lent, and I desire to meditate upon the preparation necessary for turning that holy time to account, by looking into my heart and conscience, and purifying myself for the due contemplation of our LORD's precious death and burial, as also of His glorious resurrection and ascension. "Lord, that I may receive my sight," is now what I humbly hope for and humbly pray for. Oh, say unto my soul those gracious words, "Receive thy sight," that I may in firm faith crucify my affections and lusts, and being buried with Thee, may pass to a joyful resurrection in newness of life.

I am sitting by the way side, blind, helpless; carried whithersoever my natural inclinations, my worldly wishes, and my human passions, lead me. I am now sitting, and I hear

sounds of multitudes passing; I want to know what leads so many on exactly the same road. I hear of JESUS; He is near me, He is passing. I cannot discern Him, my spiritual eyes are gone; there is a blank before me, and black darkness all around. Suddenly I mourn over my infirmity. I desire to see, I long to behold Him, Who has done great things for me already, by placing me in such a position that I may find Him. I call out, JESUS, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me. The gracious LORD hears; His ears are ever attentive to the cry of the penitent. He desires me to approach; I am near to JESUS;—"What wilt Thou that I should do unto thee?" "LORD, that I may receive my sight."

LORD, I desire to be wholly Thine; I long after perfect union with Thee; I desire to be with Thee in Thy agony, to feel all the cruel tortures inflicted by Thine enemies, to be nailed to Thy cross, to descend into Thy tomb, to rise with Thee; but I am unworthy, LORD, I am unworthy. Make me less unworthy LORD, that I may receive my sight; that I may cast away from me the garments defiled by sin and by all the dust of this world,—every thing that keeps

me from being wholly Thine; then I will follow Thee, I will worship Thee, I will glorify Thee.

Resolve, O my soul, to keep thyself, during the ensuing Lent, as the blind beggar, humbly sitting by the road side. Refrain thyself, and keep thyself low. Come down, sit in the dust, and with lowly supplications beseech thy loving Saviour to grant thee thy sight, that thine eyes being opened to a sense of thy many secret faults, thou mayest enter upon a rigid correction of thine errors; and then thou mayest beg of Him the mercies and blessings which ensue, after a strict and searching Lent, — even a holy and happy Easter.

St. Andrew.

AND JESUS WALKING BY THE SEA OF GALILEE, SAW TWO BRETHREN, SIMON CALLED PETER, AND ANDREW HIS BROTHER, CASTING A NET INTO THE SEA: FOR THEY WERE FISHERS. AND HE SAID UNTO THEM, FOLLOW ME, AND I WILL MAKE YOU FISHERS OF MEN. AND THEY STRAIGHTWAY LEFT THEIR NETS, AND FOLLOWED HIM.—St. Matthew, iv. 18, 19, 20.

LORD, be with me in this my meditation; and, though I be unworthy of the least of Thy favours, give me the assistance of Thy grace, to forward this my poor endeavour for the good of my soul.

We here see JESUS walking by the sea shore: two brothers are working together for their daily bread; they are poor men following the humble trade of fishers. JESUS approaches them: we may imagine that there was something mysteriously awful in His sacred presence, though veiled in the humble garb of a person in obscure circumstances. He says to these two brethren,

the simple words, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." They could not have understood the full meaning of these words; those only, who have read the subsequent lives of the Apostles, can perceive their import; and, yet, they unhesitatingly obeyed, cast their nets away, and followed Him.

It is not to think upon the life of St. Andrew, that this meditation is entered upon; his firm and holy character is allowed faintly to shine out in the Gospel narrative, and every word is full of instruction; but it is one point alone which I wish to dwell upon, — his firm uncompromising obedience. He left his net — the means by which he gained his living — and at the command of Jesus, he followed Him.

Consider, O my soul, this example; and remember that thou hast the commands of thy Master, contained in His Holy Word, always before thee. Thou must, therefore, pass thy life in studying that Word, and endeavouring to find out what the will of thy Master is; — and more than this — thou must watch strictly and narrowly all the providential hints and notices of God's blessed will. Do thy duty to the utmost extent of thy ability; and, whether it is in

journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by thine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, or in cold and nakedness, that thou art called upon to serve thy most blessed Saviour, do all, suffer all, and rejoice in all, as if thou heardst thy Saviour say, "Follow Me."

O blessed Jesus, grant that I may follow the steps of Thy most holy life; and in perfect obedience to Thy blessed will, may go on from strength to strength, until, clinging firmly to Thy cross, I may be wholly and entirely dissolved into Thee, having no other wish, no other will than this: "Thy will be done."

St. Thomas.

BLESSED ARE THEY THAT HAVE NOT SEEN, AND YET HAVE BELIEVED.—St. John, xx. 29.

GUIDE me, O blessed Spirit, that I may, by rightly meditating on this Scripture, be confirmed in my faith, and may be enabled to bring forth the fruits thereof.

I picture to myself the upper room, which was used by our LORD for celebration of His last passover, and for the institution of the blessed sacrament of His body and blood. The apostles and disciples were assembled, and our LORD suddenly appeared among them. He gives them His blessing; He then calls Thomas to Him, and by making him touch the blessed wounds in His hands and feet, by thrusting his hand into His side, He gives him the evidence which he required for the confirmation of his faith. Thomas, at once, overpowered by the Divine Presence and by the undoubted evidence of his senses, exclaims, My LORD and my GOD.

Our blessed LORD then says the encouraging words, on which we, who come after, live and nourish our faith.

If we follow the leading of the Church, how tenderly does she guide us through the round of faith and practice! Now, as we are approaching the time in which we enter upon the consideration of our blessed LORD's life in all its particulars, she brings before us the example of St. Thomas, as if she said to us, "You are now going to have placed before you the life of our LORD and Saviour JESUS CHRIST; see that you dwell on each particular as if brought before your bodily eyes, and be not faithless but believing."

In this manner do I most fervently desire to act. I wish to bring each fact before my eyes, and each doctrine into my mind, that they may become, as it were, part of myself, and may exclude everything that may tend to nourish vain questions and reasonings, which would only disturb my faith, and, by bringing self more before me, may prevent that entire union and oneness with GOD, which is, we are told, the state at which all true Christians are to aim.

My soul, transport thyself into that upper room, and behold the Divine Person of thy

Saviour; see the love, and pity, and tenderness, and majesty, and divinity, beaming in His countenance. Place thyself by the side of St. Thomas; contemplate the wounds inflicted for thy sins, which let out all thy disease. Think upon Him Who has done and suffered all this for thee, and fall prostrate at His feet, exclaiming, "My Lord and my God."

Conversion of St. Paul.

AND HE SAID, WHO ART THOU, LORD? AND THE LORD SAID, I AM JESUS WHOM THOU PERSECUTEST.—Acts, ix. 5.

A SMALL band of men are travelling across a desert, sandy plain; their leader, who is a little in advance of the rest, is a stern and thoughtful looking man, whose countenance bears marks of steady purpose and fixed resolve. He rides along without marking any passing object; he is absorbed in his own dark and gloomy thoughts.

Suddenly a bright light shines around the party, so dazzling, so unusual, and so awful, that they fall prostrate on the ground. The leader alone hears a voice from the midst of the fearful splendour, and it says, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" He, trembling, and hardly trusting his senses, says, "Who art Thou, Lord?" the voice answers, "I am JESUS, Whom thou persecutest."

In that short moment how must all the events

of his past life have flashed across the mind of the repentant Saul! — the arrogance of his faith, the pitilessness of his persecutions; — his prominent recollection is one dying look, one prayer for him; that prayer, the efficacy of which he never thought of until that instant. "Who art Thou, LORD?" Poor, miserable wretch, not to know, not to feel, that the LORD Who addressed him, was the JESUS, Whom in His suffering servants and children he had been persecuting!

To the martyr, Stephen, the LORD JESUS shewed Himself, a GOD of mercy and pity, comforting him, sustaining his faith, and holding out the prospect of speedy deliverance and reward. To Saul, JESUS did not manifest Himself, He only revealed the dazzling and awful brightness which surrounded Him, and spoke to him words, which pierced him like a two-edged sword, converting at once that heart of fire to Himself, and making it fit for the great work which he was the instrument to perform.

The conversion of St. Paul shews what a mysterious and awful thing the turning of a soul to GOD is. Here we are permitted partly to draw aside the veil which covers the secret workings of the Most High, and to hear the voice of JESUS,

revealing that the things done to His servants, are done unto Him.

I can imagine a soul lately convinced of its sin, struggling in darkness and gloom with fearful apprehensions, contemplating with horror its loathsome defilement, not knowing where to look for cleansing and comfort. Suddenly a light breaks in; a voice, even the voice of the Saviour says, "Why persecutest thou Me? why wilt thou defile the purchase of My blood?" The sinner exclaims, "Who art Thou, LORD?" "I am JESUS." Yea, it is the Saviour come to break the fabric of sin, and to bring all into subjection unto Himself. The sinner can then hope for pardon and for grace; he clings to the hope set before him, and undergoes all the fatherly discipline of Him Whom he had before persecuted with his sins.

The Purification.

AND WHEN THE DAYS OF HER PURIFICATION ACCORDING TO THE LAW OF MOSES WERE ACCOMPLISHED, THEY BROUGHT HIM TO JERUSALEM, TO PRESENT HIM TO THE LORD. — St. Luke, ii. 22.

BEHOLD, there enter into the temple two persons; one an aged man carrying two turtle doves; and a young woman, bearing an Infant. They appear to be of the humble class; but look nearer, and see that it is the blessed Virgin and St. Joseph, bringing the Infant JESUS, to present Him to GOD in His temple. How marvellous does it appear that He should come into His own temple, that GOD should condescend to be so borne in by a woman, when He was the great LORD of all! The scene before us, is of a humble man and woman with a young child; but our spiritual eyes descern in them a royally-descended pair; and in the Infant, GOD, — Immanuel, GOD with us; with our spiritual eyes we see that procession marshalled in by herald-angels; surrounded by heavenly guards,

cherubim and seraphim, who encircle the Holy Child, and bend before Him in unspeakable adoration.

There was no need that the blessed Virgin should be purified, she had contracted no uncleanness in the miraculous birth; but, obedient in all things, the handmaid of the Lord would fulfil the whole law; but her poverty constrained her to bring the meanest offering, two turtle doves, —themselves the emblems of purity; and with these two doves was the First Born redeemed, waiting for the third, the true Dove, Who is ever mystically present to hallow the offering of the true Lamb.

Now is the Lord come suddenly to His temple, and who shall abide the day of His coming? for He is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap. The pure in heart, they shall abide; they shall see God. The Lord is in His holy temple, and we, if we be not washed, if we be not purified, must stand without.

Under the gospel we are all first-born, all heirs; every soul is to be holy unto the Lord; we are a royal generation, a holy priesthood. Our baptism, as it is our circumcision and our sacrifice of purification, so also is it our presentation to God. Nothing can become us but

holiness and purity. O God, to Whom we are devoted, serve Thyself of us, glorify Thyself by us, till we shall by Thee be glorified with Thee.

There was another in the temple, led there by the Holy Spirit, who having waited for the consolation of Israel, was brought to see the blessed fulfilment of his expectation. Simeon, when he saw, through inspiration, God in the form of the tender Babe, took Him up in his arms and uttered that hymn, which breathes the thankfulness of a spirit whose cravings have been fully and entirely satisfied: "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation."

There was also one Anna, a prophetess, a widow of fourscore and four years; she had lived in the service of the temple, in devotion, fasting and prayer. It was in the temple, the same place where she had, for so many years, poured out her heart to God, that God poured forth His heart to her, sent His Son from His bosom, and there she received His benediction. Thus were there four states of life,—virgin, married, aged, and widow, inspired by the Holy Spirit, to prophecy concerning Christ.

My soul, do thou marvel at the loving-kindness of the LORD, Who has left no age nor condition without abiding proofs of His care; and do thou, with Simeon, wait for the coming of the LORD, and for the consolation of our Israel; and with Anna, serve GOD with fastings and prayers, night and day.

LORD, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace: according to Thy word.

For mine eyes have seen: Thy salvation.

Which Thou hast prepared: before the face of all people;

To be a light to lighten the Gentiles: and to be the glory of Thy people Israel.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son: and to the Holy Ghost;

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be: world without end. *Amen.*

St. Matthias.

AND THE LOT FELL UPON MATTHIAS; AND HE WAS NUMBERED WITH THE ELEVEN APOSTLES.—Acts, i. 26.

I PICTURE to myself that upper room, which is become dear to the imagination of all Christians. There did our LORD institute the blessed sacrament; there did He pronounce those discourses to His disciples, on which the mind hangs with devout admiration, and which inspire comfort, hope, and joy, and the most holy emotion of tenderness and love towards our Divine Master. There did He vouchsafe to shew Himself to the disciples after His resurrection; there did He strengthen the weak faith of the doubting Thomas; and it was there that "He breathed on them," and gave them the commission to remit and to retain sins. But that commission was given to eleven apostles only,—the twelfth had, by transgression, fallen; and immediately after they had witnessed the ascension of their dearest LORD, Whom they then knew as their Saviour

and their God, the disciples returned to the upper room. How was that humble room now hallowed and glorified by the recollection of Him Who had so lately vouchsafed to walk among them; how must every object have brought before them Him Whose presence must have been to them light and life; and with what anxiety must they have sought in all things to do His blessed will!

They immediately proceeded to complete their number, not by election among themselves, but by placing the matter before the Lord. They chose two men who had followed our Lord, and who had been witnesses of His mighty words and deeds; — they prayed, —

"Thou, Lord, Which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two Thou hast chosen,

"That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.

"And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles."

Matthias went forth, and is said to have worked the work of an apostle in Ethiopia, where he fell an early martyr to the faith.

The festival of St. Matthias is placed by the Church at the season when it must necessarily either come within the fast of Lent, or so immediately precede it, as to be mixed up, as it were, with that season of sorrow and penitence. How wisely does the Church arrange that the consideration of the apostle, whose history is so immediately connected with that of the traitor Judas, should fall at a season when sin, its deformities and its punishments, ought to be more especially before us.

The history of that awful apostate and traitor, is one from which the mind shrinks with horror. After the author of all evil himself, Judas ever recurs to the mind as the type of all sin and wickedness, and he is brought before us as the traitor. He betrayed our most blessed Lord, and with a fawning, hypocritical kiss, denoted Him to the officers who came to take Him. He sold the Lord, the Saviour, for thirty pieces of silver. But in this life he experienced some of the torments prepared for the wicked; he repented himself, and went to the chief priests with the confession of his own guilt and his Saviour's innocence, but he found no place of repentance though he sought it with tears; and

we have the terrible assurance, from the words of inspiration, that he went to his own place, the place of the wicked. O terrible sentence of most just judgment. Grant, LORD, that I may be preserved from so sinning away Thy grace: may I never deny Thee, lest Thou deny me; may I never sell my interest in Thee for the perishable things of this world, lest at that last and dreadful day Thou appear to me a terrible and tremendous Judge, and lest I hear those dreadful words, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels!"

O ALMIGHTY GOD, Who into the place of the traitor Judas didst choose Thy faithful Matthias to be of the number of the twelve Apostles; grant that Thy Church, being always preserved from false Apostles, may be ordered and guided by faithful and true pastors; through JESUS CHRIST our LORD. *Amen.*

End of Part I.

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